



DIOCESE OF CAMDEN  
OFFICE OF THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR

February 26, 2004

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

On this Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, two national reports which were commissioned by the Catholic bishops of the United States are scheduled to be released. One is a report of the National Review Board that will set forth preliminary conclusions concerning the possible cause or causes of child sexual abuse by priests. The other report will set forth the results of a national survey which was conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York and which is intended to examine the extent of sexual abuse in the Church. These reports are two components of the Church's effort to understand the scope of the abuse on a national level, to analyze the possible cause or causes of the abuse in the past and, most important, to prevent any such abuse in the future. I am writing to you now to provide you with a summary of the information that is included in the John Jay College survey for our Diocese.

Our survey results show that, out of the 1,416 diocesan and religious order priests who have served in our Diocese since its establishment in 1937, there have been 33—or 2.3%—against whom allegations of sexual abuse, brought by 63 individuals, have been substantiated. Of these 33 priests, 10 are deceased, 21 have been permanently removed from ministry and forbidden to serve as priests, and in the cases where they reside outside of the Diocese, the local bishops have been advised of their status. Following the recommendation of the Diocesan Review Board, the cases of 2 priests - who have already been removed from ministry – are being referred to the Vatican for instructions as to what further disciplinary restrictions are to be imposed. The Board also concluded that the accusations against 7 other priests were unfounded.

Almost 50% of the incidents of abuse involving priests in the Diocese of Camden occurred in the 1970's. 3% occurred in the 1950's, 20% in the 1960's, 24% in the 1980's, 3% in the 1990's. The last reported incident of sexual abuse occurred almost 9 years ago in 1995. Every accusation against a living priest - regardless of its disposition by the Review Board - has been referred to the county prosecutor of the county where the abuse is alleged to have occurred. It is most important to bear in mind that no priest against whom a credible accusation of child abuse has been made remains in ministry in our Diocese.

As previously reported, the Diocese has paid out \$5,654,197 in settlement of the legal claims that have been filed against it. We have relied on self-funded insurance reserves to satisfy these outlays and we have submitted this amount, together with legal fees and other associated costs, to our insurance carriers for reimbursement.

Sociologists and other experts will debate, scrutinize and study this question and the results of the nationwide survey which was conducted by the John Jay College. It is, of course, easy to get caught up in numbers and statistics and forget what all of this is about: that the abuse of minors by Catholic clergy is not only criminal, it is a shameful betrayal of God and His people and, simply stated, is a grievous sin.

It has often been said, at various times in history, that if we spend the present arguing and debating about the past we run the risk of losing the future. The failings of those in the Church are there for all to see but this is - we pray God - something of the past. These failings have been reviewed, analyzed and dissected and we in leadership positions within the Church have asked - and continue to ask - for forgiveness. I myself have met with victims of abuse to personally request forgiveness upon behalf of the Church, and to offer my hope for reconciliation and healing. Not only must we continue to make the care of those who have been harmed in the past an ongoing priority but we must also respond to the future. As people of hope the lessons of the past have instilled in us a determination to assure that such an outrage never occurs again. That is why our Diocese has moved to:

- **PROMOTE HEALING AND RECONCILIATION** with victims/survivors through a comprehensive outreach program, by paying for counseling and other services, through the work of our Victim Assistance Coordinator, our Clinical Advisory Panel and a special victims/survivors support group; thus far the Diocese has expended

\$451,485 in providing counseling, vocational training, group therapy sessions and other assistance to those who have been victimized;

- **GUARANTEE AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO EVERY ALLEGATION** through an independent, toll-free 800 number to report allegations, through our policy of reporting every allegation to the civil authorities, through our long-standing policy of cooperation with law enforcement officials now codified in the historic Memorandum of Understanding between the Catholic dioceses of New Jersey and the 21 county prosecutors, and through the work of the Diocesan Review Board which is chaired by retired Superior Court Judge Philip A. Gruccio;
- **PROTECT THOSE ENTRUSTED TO OUR CARE** through safe environment training programs, screening and criminal history background checks for priests, deacons and seminarians, and for educational and volunteer personnel, and
- **ENSURE THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE CHURCH'S PROCEDURES** through open and active communications with parishioners and the public and through our participation in and full cooperation with the independent audit and survey commissioned by the bishops.

In 2002 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted comprehensive policies that each diocese is mandated to follow in protecting the young. These are set forth in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, and audits were conducted in 2003 by independent examiners to assure compliance with the *Charter*. The compliance audit, conducted by a team of former law enforcement officers, found us to be in complete conformance with the requirements of the *Charter*. The results of this audit, which were reported last month, note that our Diocese has even gone beyond the extensive requirements of the *Charter* in attempting to do everything we can to protect those entrusted to our care.

Finally, I need not tell you that the Church's voice in the public square upon behalf of the poor, the unborn and the powerless is often unpopular, and that its adherence to Christ's teachings, which many in society wish to jettison because they believe that they are outmoded, will always be criticized. Inevitably some who are anxious to see the Church confined to the margins may attempt to use the results of the John Jay College survey to shame and even silence the Church.

Shamed we indeed are by this public acknowledgment of our failings; but silent - upon behalf of those who have no voice, and upon behalf of the values which have few other advocates - we shall never be.

During this season of prayer and penance we ask the Lord's mercy for the times we in the Church have failed. We pray especially for those who have suffered the betrayal of abuse by those in the Church that they may find lasting healing and reconciliation, and we pray that those who serve the People of God may always have the courage to follow our Lord faithfully.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Th. Morgan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "M".

Reverend Monsignor Thomas J. Morgan  
Apostolic Administrator