

# The Archdiocese of Newark's historical accounting of clergy sexual abuse of minors

February 25, 2004

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Second Vatican Council taught much about what is required of bishops, priests and lay men and women in their duty to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. Today, I want to reiterate and make it very clear that I stand with the bishops of our country, the priests of this Archdiocese and all priests in these United States, as well as with all those dedicated men and women who continue to give so much of their time in Catholic parishes, schools and institutions. As a bishop I am called to serve in a particular way in the work of Christ. The priests of the Archdiocese share this work with me. "Priests by virtue of their ordination to the priesthood are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood. In individual dioceses, priests form one priesthood under their own bishop." (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, 8). "All presbyters... participate in and exercise with the bishop the one priesthood of Christ and are thereby constituted prudent cooperators of the episcopal order." (*Christus Dominus*, 28). I am grateful to the men who have been faithful cooperators in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I know how difficult these last two years have been for the good priests who are serving so well and faithfully in our parishes and institutions. Unfortunately I know too that some bishops and priests share in the guilt of the abuse of young people entrusted to the Church. The news media has painted with a broad stroke and all bishops and priests have become suspect. Given all this, however, I believe that we are now at a time where we can begin to find healing for victims of abuse, for those accused, and for all the faithful.

Throughout the past two years, many of us have asked the obvious question—"How could this have happened in our Church?"

It is a question that has required much thought and research to find the answer. We can only eliminate the sin of sexual abuse of minors in the Catholic Church if we understand the scope and beginnings of the problem. As difficult and painful as it is, we must confront the actual cases, the causes and results, and the costs—physical and emotional—of the Church's past history if we are to prevent abuse in the future.

This has not been easy to do. Most reports of abuse by members of the clergy have come to the attention of the Church only recently—since the onset of the crisis in early 2002. At the time these crimes were committed, and for years afterward, few came forward to the Church or, for that matter, to law enforcement.

It is primarily for this reason—the long delay in reporting—that the Archdiocese has had to reconstruct many incidents to determine or verify facts—so that we could learn the truth of particular allega-



tions and take appropriate actions. I regret that it has taken so long, but I felt most strongly that it was critical for everyone—victims, those accused, and you—to receive accurate information about any incidents that have occurred here in the Archdiocese over the years. Long before the beginnings of this crisis, my predecessors and I, and the priests, religious and lay people who have assisted us, have been reasoned, deliberate and comprehensive in our examination of any charge against Church personnel. It is important that we used this approach because many victims and those accused have asked us to maintain confidentiality. I am sure you can appreciate this desire on the part of anyone who is trying to deal with the mental anguish of talking about having been abused, as well as those who are facing an accusation.

But it is important to note here that, in large measure, men and women who have come with information also have wanted the Archdiocese to maintain their confidentiality and anonymity. We have done so to the extent we have been able under the laws of this state.

That is why, throughout the past two years, we had not published the names of any priests or victims, or discussed details of specific cases. We have, however, shared all of this information with law enforce-

ment authorities, and will continue to do so.

We also had not published any specifics about our investigations to date because, until very recently, the majority of allegations were still being investigated by the Archdiocesan Review Board or were in process of being forwarded to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

## Time to Share Information

As each diocese in the United States has struggled with examining its particular cases of allegations, the Catholic Bishops of the United States realized that we needed to take a nationwide look at this problem. For that reason, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops chose to gather all available information on cases of abuse by clergy over the past 50 years. In doing so, it was our hope to gain understanding, and to have a true basis for addressing the problem in the long term.

Experts from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York undertook this study. As you read this letter, the Conference has released its results, a comprehensive compilation of the experience of all Catholic dioceses in the United States. It presents for the first time anywhere the many different elements of this issue, including the number of allegations against clergy, how the Church has dealt with these cases, and the financial cost to the Church throughout the United States.

To our knowledge, it is the first such study of its kind dealing with sexual abuse by any single group, profession or subset of society.

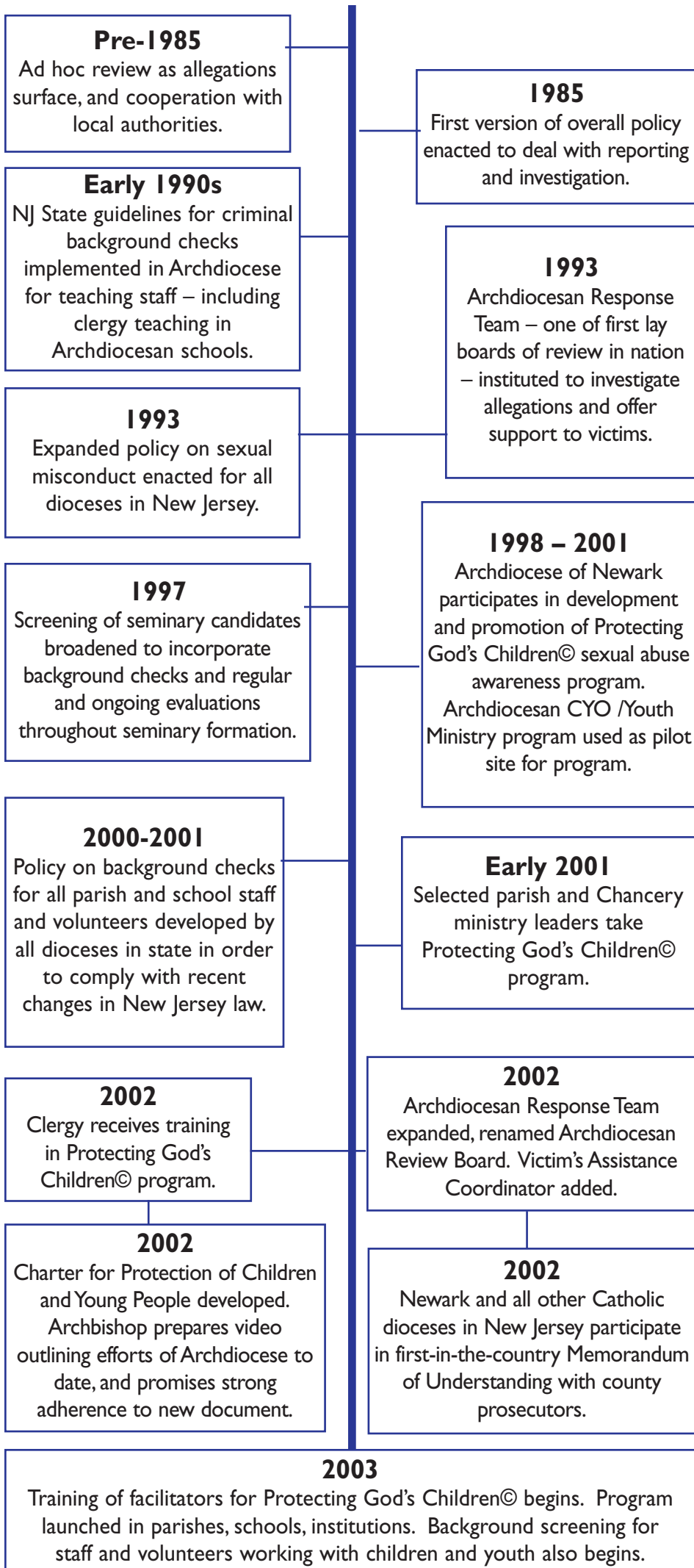
The Archdiocese of Newark participated in this study, and I want to present to you today the information we provided to the John Jay study team.

## Less than Two Percent of Clergy Offended

Over the more than 50 years covered by the John Jay study, some 3,130 diocesan and adjunct priests, religious priests and deacons have served in the Archdiocese of Newark. In that same period, 91 allegations of sexual misconduct with minors have been brought to our attention. Some 71 diocesan, adjunct and religious priests and deacons have been accused of misconduct while serving in the parishes, schools or institutions located in the four counties of the Archdiocese. Of this number, 52 were priests of the Archdiocese or adjunct priests from other dioceses on temporary assignment in the Archdiocese. The remaining 19 were members of religious congregations.

Of this total, 20 have returned to ministry following an investigation by the Archdiocese and/or local civil authorities. Another 13 priests were deceased at the time the Archdiocese originally received the alle-

## Actions Taken by Archdiocese of Newark in Response to Sexual Misconduct



gation, so a thorough investigation was not possible. Nine priests are no longer part of the Archdiocese and their faculties to function as priests have been removed.

Six priests have retired without faculties to function as priests. Another six, who are members of religious communities, have been referred to their congregations and are not permitted to serve in the Archdiocese.

Allegations against the remaining 17 priests are either still under investigation by the Archdiocese and/or civil authorities, or have been referred to the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith. These men remain out of ministry.

The 51 priests no longer in ministry represent only 1.6 percent of the clergy who have served. This number includes those who are deceased.

I agree with you completely that it is unacceptable to read of even one allegation against a member of the clergy. And our efforts to date to remove those who have offended are strong, determined and relentless. I reiterate to you today my pledge that no one who offends will remain in service in this Archdiocese.

This problem which we have faced is a problem present in society and in fact, most sexual abuse occurs within families. It is sad that this problem has even affected those who work in the Church and has cast a pall over the tremendous good work the Church does every day. We cannot forget the blessing that we have long known here in the Archdiocese: the overwhelming number of men who have served this local Church of Newark as priests, and the lay people dedicated to serving their local parishes, have been faithful and committed to helping young people by providing safe places for education and recreation.

### Most Cases of Abuse Decades Old

One of the most confusing and disheartening aspects of the crisis is the prevalence of reports in the media that seemed to infer that abuse by clergy was a constant and growing issue. Our experience in the Archdiocese over the 50-year period of the study indicates the opposite, however. The majority of the cases, while reported only recently, are actually decades old.

Those of you who have attended the Protecting God's Children© sexual abuse awareness program here in the Archdiocese know the historical reasons why abuse has gone unreported: shame, fear of not being believed, fear of retribution, to name a few. We know that sexual abuse does not occur in the open, and is rarely seen. We also know that, historically, we did not know the warning signs. That does not excuse us from acting responsibly and justly now. In line with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Catholic dioceses of New Jersey and the New Jersey Attorney General, all information about these allegations has been provided to the county prosecutors in the four counties of the Archdiocese. We would hope that all other religious and secular youth-serving organizations in the state undertake similar public commitments. In instances where prosecutors can take action against someone for sexual abuse, we pledge to cooperate to the fullest extent. We also pledge to be compassionate to those who come forward with accusations, offering counseling and support so that they can begin healing.

### Payments Primarily for Counseling Support and Treatment

The Archdiocese also reported to the John Jay Study that since 1950 payments for claims counseling, legal assistance and case related payments to individuals who had brought allegations to its attention, and clinical or psychological services for those priests accused of misconduct, totaled some \$2.2 million. The largest portion of this figure, \$705,510, was for medical and psychological treatment for priests accused of sexual misconduct. The next highest portion, \$704,265, was for claims payments arising from allegations. Another \$628,929 represented legal expenses for both the Archdiocese and people who came forward with allegations. A final \$149,338 represented voluntary payments by the Archdiocese for victim counseling in matters involving actual or alleged sexual abuse of minors.

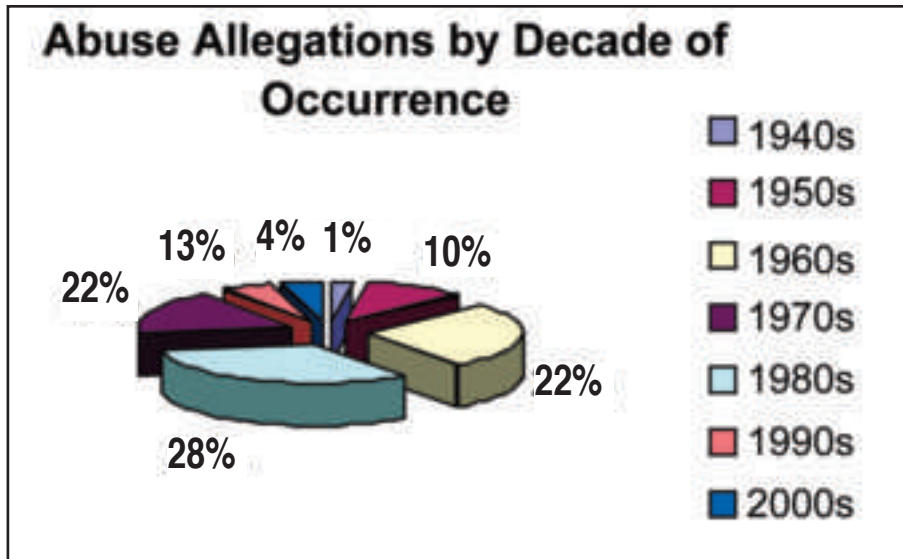
All monies for these payments came from insurance-related funds of the Archdiocese, and not from direct contributions of parishioners or from the Archbishop's Annual Appeal.

### Next Steps

I have already restated our commitment to you, the people of the Archdiocese, that sexual abuse will not be tolerated in the Archdiocese of Newark. In doing so, we stand on very strong ground in our efforts over the decades. From our initial policies in the mid 1980s, to more formal policies, to our participation in drafting and implementing a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding with the New Jersey Attorney General and county prosecutors, we are committed to obeying all current and future laws dealing with sexual abuse.

We are also committed to pursuing all appropriate options available under the law of the Church to assure that those who offend never return to ministry.

The Archdiocese was one of the first dioceses in the country to implement a lay review board to examine allegations and recommend actions to take. Over the 11 years of its existence, committed Catholic lay men and women



the victim's assistance coordinator has ensured that victims and their families receive important psychological support as soon as they enter the Review Board process.

In addition to the victim's assistance coordinator, victims have the opportunity to participate in a professionally led victims' support group funded by, but independent of, the Archdiocese.

The idea of support services—the start of healing—goes well beyond the needs of those with allegations

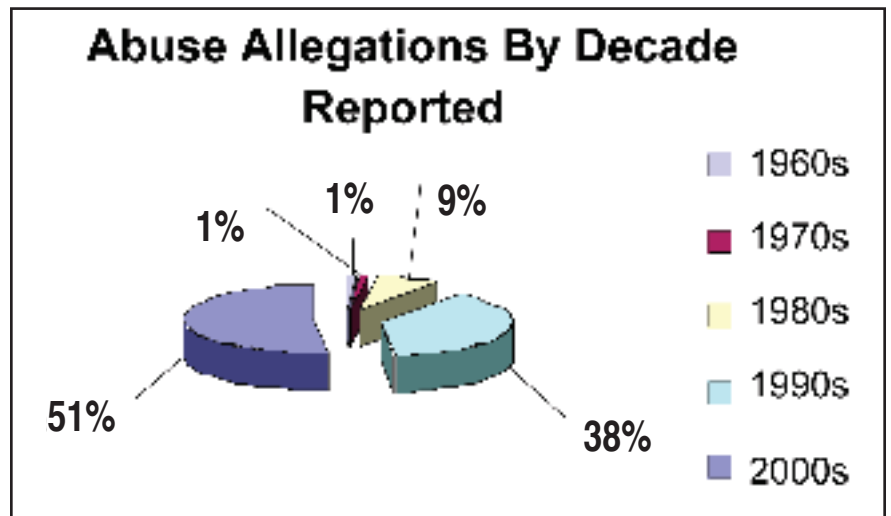
ing myself, have taken the program. It is now offered as a regular part of training for every staff member and volunteer working with children and young adults at parishes, schools and institutions. We estimate that close to 20,000 individuals in the Archdiocese have participated in this training to date. In the months to come, we will encourage parishes to offer this program to the entire parish community and to neighboring communities in order to address the issue of sexual abuse on a more global scale.

Background screening for all staff and volunteers is now a standard element in recruiting and training at parishes, schools and institutions serving children and youth. Although we understand the sensitivities of this step, it is critical in our efforts to assure a safe environment in the Archdiocese.

with extensive law, law enforcement, medical, clinical and psychological expertise have been my representatives—the face of the Archdiocese—to those who have come forward, and to those who have been accused. Their confidential and comprehensive inquiries into each matter, and their recommendations about appropriate actions, have served you, the people of the Archdiocese, and me well. I thank them for this important service.

We further strengthened the Review Board in the past couple of years through the addition of a retired New Jersey State Supreme Court Justice as a consultant, and a full-time healthcare professional as a victim's assistance coordinator. Although we characteristically have provided counseling and support victims,

tions. The Archdiocese has instituted support services for parish staffs when a pastor must step down because of an allegation to assist them through their difficult time. Similarly, the Archdiocese provides a professionally led support group for clergy who have been accused. Before the onset of the crisis, the Archdiocese had offered the Protecting God's Children® sexual abuse awareness program to ministry leaders at the parish level. All clergy, includ-



**Total Clergy Serving in Archdiocese 1950-2002 (3130)**

= 25 Clergy

**Of this number...**

71 Accused of Sexual Abuse

**Of this number...**

13 Deceased at time Allegation was Received

9 No Longer Considered Priests

6 Referred to other Dioceses or Religious Communities

6 Retired with No Faculties to Act as Priests

17 with Allegations Still Under Review

20 Investigated and Returned to Ministry

The Archdiocese takes very seriously any and all credible complaints of sexual misconduct by members of the clergy, religious and lay staff of the Archdiocese. We encourage anyone with knowledge of an act of sexual misconduct to inform the Archdiocese immediately so that we can take appropriate action to protect others and provide support to victims of sexual abuse.

To report an allegation of misconduct, call the Office of the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Newark at 973-497-4009, and the appropriate New Jersey County prosecutor:

**Bergen County – 201-646-2300**  
**Essex County – 973-621-4700**  
**Hudson County – 201-217-5380**  
**Union County – 908-527-4500**

In addition, New Jersey state law requires that anyone with knowledge of abuse of a minor call the Division of Youth and Family Services Hotline – 1-800-792-8610.

**Most important, if you suspect that a child is in imminent danger from abuse, call 9-1-1- immediately.**

## Healing Based in Faith

It is easy to say, "Had we known, we could have done something" to combat the past incidents of sexual abuse of minors by clergy in this Archdiocese. We know now, and we are taking decisive action with respect to both state and Church law.

We must work to heal the wounds created over the years, and to prevent their recurrence in the future. I know from personal experience—meeting with victims, sharing their pain, extending our sincerest sorrow and pledge of justice—that this is a first critical step on the long road to restoring trust in the Church.

I ask for your help as we walk this road of healing. Your prayers and support for our efforts are critical as we address the long-term effects of abuse on the victims.

I also ask for your prayers for those who have

offended. While they can never again serve in the Church, they remain our brothers.

As I have said so often, the overwhelming majority of clergy who have served this local Church of Newark during the past 50 years have been good men of faith. Because they, too, have been wounded, they need to be healed as well. I am proud and honored to serve this local Church with them, just as I know you are proud and honored by the way they have served you in your times of difficulty and joy. This has been difficult for me because of the special role I have as Bishop. I know full well my responsibilities to investigate any accusation, and to fulfill my promise that we will provide safe environments for all young people. Yet I also feel keenly the pain that my brother priests experience when anyone has been accused. Please pray for them.

In March 2002, at the celebration of the annual Chrism Mass, I urged us to consider that we follow

One who was completely innocent and unjustifiably crucified. And yet, He forgave those who crucified Him. It is our faith that we may join our own sufferings with His in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Today, I again urge each of us to bring this suffering and anguish—the pain of our past—to the Altar. In union with Christ, we can be confident that all suffering, pain and embarrassment will be transformed by the grace of God into gifts for His Church and for the world.

With every good wish, I remain,

Sincerely in the Lord,



✠ Most Reverend John J. Myers

## How the Archdiocese Handles Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors

Person with Allegation contacts Archdiocese.

