

December 28, 2003

Dear Members of the Archdiocese of Dubuque,

As your Archbishop, I am writing to every household currently on our mailing list. This letter contains my latest report on the sexual abuse of minors by some priests in our Archdiocese. It also describes our efforts to respond to the pastoral needs of people affected by this abuse and by the way some bishops acted in the past.

I know there is a wide range of feelings about this matter. Since January of 2002, when details of the situation in Boston became known, the attention of Church members and of the wider public has been drawn to this problem within the Catholic Church in the United States. Most of you have been surprised and shocked by these revelations.

Feelings of anger and sadness have filled many of our hearts. A sense of betrayal and disappointment is understandable. Many are confused and want more information. Some would prefer that the issue would simply go away or be put into better perspective.

In the last two years, I have communicated with you on several occasions, beginning with the Chrism Mass homily on March 26, 2002, which was published in our Archdiocesan paper, *The Witness*. Reports to the people of the Archdiocese were made in the following months; several news conferences were held along with news releases. A letter from me to the people was read at weekend Masses in all the parishes of the Archdiocese in June 2003. Notices about assistance for victims of sexual abuse were printed in the five major secular newspapers published in the Archdiocese the latter part of October. Most recently, more than a thousand posters dealing with this matter were placed throughout the Archdiocese.

With this mailing, I am reporting to you and the wider public on the progress we are making and on some specific projects undertaken by us and by the wider Catholic Church in the United States.

The Catholic bishops in the United States developed in 2002 the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The Charter identified four goals:

- (1) To promote healing and reconciliation for persons who as minors have suffered sexual abuse by clergy.
- (2) To guarantee an effective response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors.
- (3) To ensure the accountability of our procedures.
- (4) To protect the faithful in the future.

In August of 2002, I appointed a Review Board. Among its responsibilities was the review of diocesan policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors. A revised policy was made public in June of this year, and went into effect July 1, 2003. A previous policy had been in effect since December 27, 1993.

Victim Assistance Coordinators and Safe Environments

The Charter called for the designation of persons to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who have been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel. The Archdiocese of Dubuque has contracted with three trained individuals to provide this assistance. They are Dr. Thomas Anderegg (563-556-1225), Joan Hoffmann (866-319-4636) and Maureen Oates (800-803-6758).

All four dioceses in Iowa have been providing training to thousands of church personnel

through a program called Virtus. The three hour session includes two films. The first film, *A Time to Protect God's Children*, looks at the nature of sexual abuse from the perspective of both children and perpetrators. The second film, *A Plan to Protect God's Children*, provides a plan to create safe environments to prevent future sexual abuse of children.

The *Charter*, in article 13, requires dioceses to “evaluate the background of diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors utiliz[ing] the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies.” We have made good progress in doing background checks, having begun the process with the priests, the deacons, the pastoral administrators, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center staff, and the principals and teachers in Catholic schools.

Public accountability

The third goal of the Charter, dealing with public accountability, has entailed several things, including the establishment of a national Office for Child and Youth Protection and the appointment of a national Review Board. The national office was given the responsibility of “producing an annual public report on the progress made in implementing the standards in this Charter. This public report shall include the names of those dioceses which, in the judgment of this Office, are not in compliance with the provisions and expectations of this Charter” (Article 8).

The national office organized the audits of all the dioceses in the United States. The Archdiocese of Dubuque was audited by individuals of the Gavin Group on October 6-9, 2003. The results of this audit will be made public on January 6, 2004. It is our understanding that there will be a three page summary for each diocese. As soon as the report on the Archdiocese of Dubuque is published by the national Review Board, we will make it available to the public. We have been assured by the Gavin Group that the Archdiocese of Dubuque was found to be in compliance with the Charter.

The national Review Board was directed to commission two studies in order to understand more fully the sexual abuse of minors by clergy and other church personnel. The first study is called “a descriptive study ... of the nature and scope of the problem within the Catholic Church in the United States, including such data as statistics on perpetrators and victims” (Article 9). All dioceses were asked to fill out lengthy questionnaires developed by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City.

The Archdiocese of Dubuque cooperated fully in this project. When the national summary report is published, presently planned for late February of 2004, the statistics will be presented according to the standards which scientific scholarship requires. We do not know exactly what shape this public report by the John Jay College will take. However, we now share with the public the statistics of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, as this has been recommended to us by the national Review Board.

Statistics

The study asked for a report on any allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy which had been received by the Archdiocese from 1950 until the end of 2002. The request asked for information regarding when the abuse took place, so the following paragraphs will indicate this, decade by decade.

To begin with the earliest period, the Archdiocese has received allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, with the claim that the abuse took place **before 1950** and in some cases extended into the following years. Five priests were accused as having abused before 1950.

All five of those priests are deceased.

The Archdiocese has received allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, with the indication that the abuse took place **in the 1950s**, and in some cases extended into the following years. Ten priests fit into this category. Six of these priests are deceased. The four living are all of advanced age. One of them has been dismissed from the clerical state by the Pope; the other three are not permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to administer the sacraments. They are not to wear clerical garb or to present themselves publicly as priests (cf. Article 5 of the Charter).

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The Archdiocese has received allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, with the indication that the abuse took place **in the 1970s**, and in two cases extended **into the 1980s**. Five priests fit into this category. Two of these priests are deceased. Two others are of advanced age, and are not permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to administer the sacraments. They are not to wear clerical garb or to present themselves publicly as priests (cf. Article 5 of the Charter). The fifth priest (then serving as the pastor of St. Patrick in Waukon and neighboring parishes) was removed from his pastoral assignments in Spring 2002 and his priestly activity is forbidden in the same way as the others.

For the period of 1990 to 2002, we have the allegations which were made against the associate pastor at St. Columbkille in Dubuque in 1996. This priest was convicted of sexual abuse of several minors and sentenced to two ten-year prison terms.

There have been no other allegations that minors were sexually abused by clergy in the time period since 1990 to the present.

A study of our records shows that the number of priests serving in the Archdiocese from 1950 to 2002 was 973 of which 295 were members of religious congregations.

In summary, the numbers of the priests accused, according to the decade when the first abuse was claimed, according to the victims, are:

Before 1950	5
In the 1950s	10
In the 1960s	5
In the 1970s	5
In the 1990s	1

Of these 26 priests, eighteen are deceased. The accusations against twelve of these eighteen deceased were made after the priests were deceased.

The status of the eight who are still living is the following: one was dismissed from the clerical state; five are of advanced age; one was sentenced, served time and is currently on parole; and one was removed from all pastoral offices. Not one of these is permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to administer the sacraments. They are not to wear clerical garb or to present themselves publicly as priests. These restrictions were placed on some of these priests already in the 1980s.

Ten of the twenty-six priests were accused of having sexually abused a total of at least twelve female minors.

The other sixteen priests were accused of having sexually abused a total of at least fifty-five male minors.

In addition to the above cases, we have received allegations against six other priests. It has been impossible so far to evaluate adequately these allegations since the information was either vague or the person making the claim was anonymous (refusing to give name in a phone call or an email), or the persons would not give permission for their names to be used. In one case, civil authorities investigated the claims and rejected them for insufficient evidence.

Finances

In the period from 1950 to 1995, the records show that \$716,200 was paid in support of victim/survivors, some of this amount in settlements, the rest in counseling and other forms of support. Most of this money came from the insurance programs of the archdiocese. The rest came from the priests themselves.

As I reported in a public letter to the people of the Archdiocese in August of 2002, since I became Archbishop in October 1995 until the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2002, the Archdiocese paid the expenses of counseling for individuals which totaled nearly \$46,000. Financial settlements were made which totaled \$356,800. These expenses were covered by our insurance programs and by contributions made by the abusing priests.

In the past fiscal year, the Archdiocese assisted victims with counseling expenses and other forms of aid and supported programs of assistance, along with legal fees. The total amounted to \$37,217.

We continue to cover the expenses of counseling for persons making credible claims.

We anticipate expending funds in the current year to implement the Charter. The contract for the employee and volunteer training through the *Virtus* program will cost around \$30,000. To do the background checks on church and school and educational program personnel will cost more than \$60,000. The program of Victim Assistance Coordinators, posters and advertising notices in the media, and other related expenses are anticipated to exceed \$30,000. Therefore, for the current fiscal year, we have budgeted \$125,000 for prevention and screening efforts and the implementation of safe environment programs.

Renewed Apology

As the preceding paragraphs indicate, some priests have abused minors. There are many victims of these priests in our midst. We admit that fact. We confess this to God and to the entire church community.

Some of the victims have come forward; others have not. I invite and encourage anyone who as a minor suffered sexual abuse by clergy or other church personnel to make contact with one of the Coordinators of Assistance.

We want to express our sorrow and deep remorse. What the priests did was wrong. It was a crime. It was a terrible sin, one of the worst, according to the words of Jesus himself. If anyone harms a child, or scandalizes one of these little ones, it would be better if a millstone were tied around his neck and he were thrown into the depths of the sea (cf. Matthew 18:6, Luke 17:2).

We recognize the pain of the victims. We hear the anger of parents and other family members. We acknowledge they have a right to be angry that their innocent children were violated. We also are angry at priests who sexually abused minors.

I have visited personally with many victim survivors of clergy sexual abuse. I have spoken with some parents. Other Archdiocesan officials have also met with victims and parents. The steady presence and availability of the Vicars General especially should be recognized.

To those of you who read these words, who personally were abused, or who have members of your family who were abused, I offer again my apology that comes from an aching heart. From the depths of my own personal feeling, I am sorry and apologize for what those priests did to you. I apologize also for the inaction of some archbishops and for their mistaken decisions to continue allowing abusive priests to have a place of authority and respect, when they did not deserve this.

We Catholics are also understandably angry that some bishops and archbishops were more concerned about protecting the image of the church and the reputation of the priests than about protecting and helping the victims and their families.

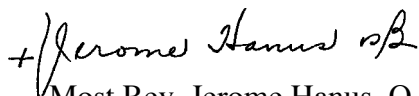
Some people say that other institutions and authorities in the past responded in a similar manner. But that is no excuse for us. Church officials — bishops and fellow priests — should have had the protection of children and the prevention of sinful and criminal acts by priests as their primary concern. Instead, at times they coddled the priests. Some were even assigned to other parishes or schools where they could continue their sexual abuse of minors.

In my own name, in the name of the archbishops who came before me, I confess to God and to you, my brothers and sisters, for what we have done, and for what we have failed to do. Recently, representatives of the priests who serve on the Presbyteral Council affirmed that they share my sentiments and support me in this response.

Catholics not only go to confession; they make a good act of contrition and a firm resolve not to sin again. I am resolved that the parishes and schools of this Archdiocese will be places where children can safely grow in knowledge and holiness and virtue.

May our archdiocesan patron, Saint Raphael the Archangel, help us make the way safe for children and young people in the future.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerome Hanus O.S.B." with a small cross symbol to the left of the name.

Most Rev. Jerome Hanus, O.S.B.
Archbishop of Dubuque