



July 12, 2010

Dear Friends in Christ,

As God's holy people, we know that we are called to embrace a life of virtue and to turn away from sin. Over the past decade we have been shamed over the revelations of sinful behavior on the part of clergy, religious and even some laity in this archdiocese which has been so harmful to many of our children. At a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council it was suggested that I inform you once again about what we, as a church, are doing in order to assist victims and protect children now and in the future. It is a task that we have undertaken with all seriousness. Our accomplishments in this respect, even though they cannot in any way compensate for the harm done in the past, still give us hope for a future where all God's children are loved and cared for as Jesus would.

I encourage you to take time to review this delineation of our present policies and accomplishments. Please join me in praying that our penance, balanced by a firm purpose of amendment, will truly bring about healing and reconciliation among all those who have been aggrieved in this matter. God bless.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

/s/ + John G. Vlazny

Most Rev. John G. Vlazny
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon



Office of the Archbishop

Dioceses across the United States are re-examining their policies on clergy misconduct as the Church in Europe faces accusations of abuse in those countries. Media coverage of these events has encouraged the faithful here to question our own policies. It seems appropriate, then, that I should tell you exactly what we are doing in this archdiocese to assure that no child in our care will ever be abused.

Childhood sexual abuse is a widespread and serious problem, not only in the Church, but in society at large. There are no words that can adequately express the damage that abuse causes to a child's spirit. There is no language that can fully express the sorrow of the Church at this betrayal of trust. As Catholics we are committed to protecting human life and respecting the dignity of every human person. This is a constant teaching in Sacred Scripture and tradition. When we work together to prevent child abuse, we are doing exactly what is expected of us as Church. It is a fundamental way of being accountable.

Here in western Oregon we are not experiencing the large number of complaints that we did several years ago, but this is no excuse for lowering our guard. Our intent is that sexual abuse of minors will never happen again within the Archdiocese of Portland. The need to protect children who may be at risk and the safety of the community will always be paramount among our concerns.

Through these years, we have developed and improved procedures and policies that reflect our concern. Even though you have been continually updated in *The Catholic Sentinel* and in other announcements, it seems useful to summarize our policies here.

Our Office for Child Protection/Victim Assistance is commissioned to provide ongoing emotional, psychological and spiritual services to those sexually abused as children. It also seeks to expand and strengthen preventative screening, training and education so that the children and youth in our programs will find a safe environment in the church.

An updated *Code of Conduct for Clergy, Employees and Volunteers* has been promulgated together with *Standards of Conduct for Persons Working with Children*. All these documents are available on the archdiocesan Web site www.archdpdx.org.

All clergy and employees of the archdiocese, our high schools, parishes and parish schools are required to have background checks at the time of placement. This background check is renewed when the person moves to a new location within the archdiocese. Employee background checks became a requirement in 1995 as part of ordinary hiring procedures. Background checks for volunteers working with minors

were required beginning in 2002. This background check must be renewed every three years. Since September, 2007, 59,919 background checks have been done for nearly 25,000 individuals who are employees or volunteers.

Any priest or religious coming from outside the archdiocese and engaged in any public ministry here is required to have a Testimonial of Suitability from his/her bishop or major superior. 1,727 testimonials for priests have been obtained to date. This testimonial must be renewed if the priest comes into the archdiocese again after one year.

All clergy and employees of the archdiocese, archdiocesan high schools, parishes and parish schools and volunteers who work regularly with children are required to attend the *Called to Protect* Training within the first 60 days of working with minors. 15,541 people have been trained in this program. Prior to this program, 9,984 people were trained in the *Safe Environment Program*. An annual update of training is required for all clergy and all employees and volunteers who work regularly with minors.

Prevention education for parents is offered every year in each archdiocesan location. Approximately 40,000 parents and adult family members have had this education. Personal safety education for children attending archdiocesan high schools, parish schools, or parish religious education or youth ministry programs is required to be offered every year at each location. Last year, about 18,000 children were trained.

Archdiocesan policy requires all personnel to report suspected child abuse in accordance with Oregon law. We encourage direct reporting of child abuse to civil authorities. Any person who has reasonable cause to believe that child abuse is a present concern is encouraged to report the suspected abuse directly to civil authorities. Church personnel will cooperate fully with civil authorities in their investigation of a child abuse report.

If the accused is a priest or deacon, we also follow the Canon Law of the Church regarding investigative procedures. According to Canon Law, the archbishop begins a preliminary investigation of the allegations against the cleric. In these circumstances the accused cleric or employee would normally be placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation.

The accused cleric is encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. The preliminary investigation concludes when there is sufficient evidence for the archbishop to decide whether it is probable or not that a crime under Canon Law has been committed.

If there is sufficient evidence that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred, the archbishop is required to report his findings to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). The Congregation then determines how to proceed with the matter, taking into consideration the recommendation of the archbishop.

The archbishop may place further restrictions upon a cleric who has been placed on administrative leave, such as his place of residence. The cleric may also be urged voluntarily to comply with an appropriate medical and psychological evaluation.

When even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon is admitted or established according to law, the offending priest or deacon is permanently removed from ministry.

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People requires that each diocese and archdiocese establish a Ministry Review Board that functions as a confidential consultative body to the bishop. Our own Archdiocesan Review Board has been meeting regularly since October, 2002. It consists of 10 members. The lay people include a retired State Supreme Court justice, an attorney, two physicians, a clinical social worker, a doctor of clinical psychology, an abuse survivor, and two lay people with extensive community experience and a priest. This board advises the archbishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of suitability for ministry. It also reviews diocesan policies and procedures for dealing with the sexual abuse of minors. The review board reviews these matters both retrospectively and prospectively and gives advice on all aspects of responses required in connection with these cases.

Like all dioceses, the Archdiocese of Portland is regularly audited for its adherence to the *Charter and Norms* as well as for the suitability of its programs dealing with the safety of children and young people. We have been found compliant with the *Charter and Norms* in every audit. Our next on-site audit is scheduled for October of 2010.

As your archbishop, I know that nothing can undo the suffering that victims have endured and I am truly sorry for their pain. Throughout these years, I have expressed my shame and sorrow on many occasions, but I know that words are not enough. The efforts outlined in this document are an expression of the accountability of the archdiocese. I believe that healing and reconciliation can come through our prayers and sacrifice. For this reason, we have had 25 Ember Days (days of prayer and fasting) for the healing and reconciliation of victims. There have been 16 archdiocesan Masses or prayer services for the same intentions and I have met with any victim who has wanted to meet with me.

A person who wishes to contact the archdiocese about past or present child abuse by church personnel can call 503-416-8810. The assistance coordinator will offer to meet with the person and offer outreach which may include professional counseling, spiritual assistance or other services.