

THE CATHOLIC CHANCERY

Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph



Office of the Bishop

January 10, 2004

My Dear Friends,

It is always most disturbing to read about the abuse of children. The tragedy is compounded when one discovers that the abuser is a priest, somebody who has pledged his life to treat all people and especially the vulnerable, like children, with great reverence and respect.

It is no joy for me to report that, in comparison to other parts of the country, we seem to have a much lower incidence of abuse. There is no joy because even one episode -- no matter how long ago it took place -- is still one too many. I acknowledge that a few of our priests have preyed upon the most vulnerable among us, our children. As your bishop, I sincerely apologize to anyone who has suffered sexual abuse by one of our priests.

The overwhelming majority of our priests -- your pastors and associate pastors -- are good and dedicated men. They, too, suffer from the stain put on the priesthood by this national calamity.

Over the ages, the Church has symbolized healing for every person and a sanctuary from injustice. People who have come to our diocese to report that they were sexually abused -- even many, many years after the abuse occurred -- deserve our respect, our prayers for their healing, and our compassion.

You, the people of our diocese, also deserve to know the facts -- the facts about the numbers of priests accused, the numbers of persons making complaints, and how your leadership has responded to those complaints. On the reverse side of this letter, on our diocesan Website, and in this week's issue of *The Catholic Key*, I offer you that. Much of this information has been given to you in the past. Your bishops pledged transparency, and I take that pledge seriously.

Even though I came to this diocese only a decade ago, I resolve to speak the truth about what transpired over the 56 years since the earliest alleged incident. I pray that this will, in some small way, aid in the process of healing our people and our Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Raymond J. Boland", with a small cross above the first letter of the first name.

Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland, DD
Bishop of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

❖ A SPECIAL REPORT ❖

To the People of the Diocese of Kansas City~St. Joseph *A Summary of the Incidence, the Reports and the Disposition of Clergy Sexual Abuse for 56 Years*

❖ Local Policies Bring Decisive Action ❖

Documents relating to diocesan safe environment programs and policies to address clergy sexual abuse are posted at www.diocese-kcsj.org. Please select the link for "Protecting God's Children."

❖ About Our Policies ❖

As early as 1988, our diocese adopted a written policy for responding to allegations of clergy sexual abuse. This policy required full compliance with the laws of the State of Missouri. After his arrival in 1993, Bishop Boland expanded the policy to provide for lay involvement in the process of responding to allegations. Your diocese anticipated the US Bishops' 2002 national plan to confront sexual abuse by having in place nearly a decade earlier a policy that created a Diocesan Response Team and an Independent Review Board. At least one member of the Diocesan Response Team is legally mandated to report child sexual abuse. Additionally, the diocese recently has utilized the expertise of Clarence M. Kelley & Associates to independently investigate allegations.

❖ Local Policies Require ❖

- Healing and reconciliation for victims of abuse
- Protecting children in all church settings
- Removing from ministry any person accused of abuse, pending an investigation
- Advising all persons making complaints that they are free to go to the civil authorities and the secular media
- Ensuring that lay persons respond to and give advice for the disposition of complaints
- Permanent removal from ministry of a clergy member who has abused a minor

❖ Local Incidence – 1948 - 2003 ❖

In 2002 the diocese received a report of abuse, which, the victim stated, had occurred in 1948. This is the earliest reported incident of sexual abuse of a minor. From 1948 through 2003, the diocese received 35 complaints of sexual abuse. All allegations describe events that happened in or before 1992. No one has alleged sexual abuse by a priest of our diocese later than 1992. No priest of the diocese ever has faced criminal charges for sexual abuse.

During these 56 years, 476 men served as priests of the diocese. Of this group, 20 have been accused of sexual misconduct with minors. Five of the 20 were exonerated after extensive investigations.

❖ Local Impact – 1948 – 2003 ❖

In February 2003, the diocese released a detailed report of all costs related to clerical sexual abuse covering the time period 1951 – 2002. This summary appeared in *The Catholic Key* and was reported by the secular media.

As of December 31, the total diocesan cost associated with clerical sexual abuse was \$855,826, which came from diocesan insurance reserves. The payments did not in any way reduce diocesan commitments to educational, social or pastoral services. By way of comparison, this year the diocese will provide more than \$2.4 million in operational support of schools, and for youth, young adult and campus ministry programs. Additionally, total diocesan and parish expenditures for Catholic education this year will surpass \$61 million. No costs associated with clerical sexual abuse ever came from the Bishop's Annual Appeal, Together We Can.

Among the 15 Accused Priests

- 11 were credibly accused¹ – 2.3%
- 4 faced inconclusive allegations² – .8%

Status of the Accused

- 3 deceased
- 4 dismissed from the priesthood
- 4 retired and later were barred from ministry
- 2 removed from ministry and later died
- 1 already resided in a nursing home at time of complaint
- 1 left ministry in 1989, 17 months before any complaint

1 What is a credible complaint? All complaints are heard and investigated by the Diocesan Response Team. A formal report of their findings is referred to the Independent Review Board. The board meets, reviews the report, determines credibility, and recommends a course of action to the bishop.

2 Why are some complaints inconclusive? Inconclusive complaints are brought to the attention of the diocese after the death of the priest or when the priest was mentally unable to respond. Of these four, three were dead and one was in a nursing home and diagnosed with dementia. In each case there was a single allegation.