



Diocese of Joliet

Office of the Bishop

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Dear Friends in Christ,

In recent years, reports of the sexual abuse of young people by members of the clergy and others have brought great scandal and sadness to us Catholics and others. Having met with some victims over the past several years, I have heard first-hand heart-wrenching stories of abuse. I join my brother bishops in a profound apology to you and all those who have experienced the deep pain and scars of sexual abuse inflicted by anyone acting in the name of the Church.

This report is the continuation of a series of diocesan reports and is the first to be issued since I became bishop of Joliet in the summer of 2006. It gives me an opportunity to be accountable to you for the implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

First, if you were ever the victim of sexual abuse by a member of the clergy serving the Diocese of Joliet or another person acting in the name of the Diocese, please contact our Victim Assistance Coordinator, Mrs. Barbara Jarvis Pauls. You have my word that you will be treated with love and respect, and we will offer any help that we can. Something precious has been stolen from you. We pray that God will restore your peace and that you will forgive us.

Second, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2000 states that for even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor, the offending cleric will be permanently removed from ministry. To the best of my knowledge, there is no priest or deacon of the Diocese of Joliet with a current assignment in this diocese or in any other diocese who has ever had a finding of a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. If you have knowledge indicating that this is not true, please contact me or Fr. Joseph Tapella, my Vicar General.

The Charter

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* is a blueprint for responding to the problem of sexual abuse of children and young people by clergy and others acting in the name of the Church. Every diocese in the United States is committed to implementing the Charter. Thousands of people in the Diocese of Joliet have been working diligently since the Charter was issued to ensure that the children and young people of our diocese are safe and secure in the Church.

The Gavin Audit

To provide independent verification of every bishop's implementation of the Charter, the USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) Office of Child and Youth Protection contracted with the Gavin Group, Inc., an independent auditing firm, to audit each diocese yearly and report on the diocese's compliance with the Charter.

The Diocese of Joliet has been found to be in full compliance with the Charter since the auditing process began in 2003. Our latest audit took place in October of 2007, and once again we were found in full compliance. That means that we have put in place the permanent mechanisms and processes that will enable us to do all in our power to protect our children and young people, to provide pastoral care to any victims, and to safeguard the rights of all parties involved.

The Gavin Audit measures steps we have taken to comply with the Charter. The following is a summary of the major efforts that have been undertaken by the Diocese of Joliet:

- The Diocese of Joliet has a formal and detailed policy for responding to allegations of child sexual abuse. It can be found on our diocesan website, www.dioceseofjoliet.org.
- The Diocese of Joliet has had a Review Committee since 1990 with the current structure in place since 1993 to advise the bishop on policy and make recommendations regarding allegations of sexual abuse. The current chair of the Board is Mr. Ernest Stark. The members of our review committee, the majority of whom are lay people, are experts in the fields of child psychology, child abuse, criminal investigation, and education.
- The diocese uses "Virtus: Protecting God's Children," a nationally acclaimed safe environment program, to educate adults about keeping children safe. In total, more than 41,650 adults (clergy and laity) have been trained since the inception of this program. Recent figures show that training has been made available to over 63,000 children to help them recognize and report signs of sexual abuse.
- Our diocese has a rigorous application process for men seeking to enter the seminary as future priests and for men who seek to enter formation to become permanent deacons. Furthermore, a standard part of seminary training involves awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse and how to create and maintain safe environments for children in the Church.
- The diocese continues to implement an ongoing comprehensive program of criminal background checks for all clergy, seminarians and all laypersons (employees and volunteers) who have contact with children and young people. Our most recent figures indicate that 22,550 persons who have contact with children have undergone background checks.
- I have personally met with victims of abuse and will continue to extend the same invitation to others.

Reports of new Allegations received in the past two fiscal years

2005 – 2006

During fiscal year 2005–2006 there were nine new allegations of sexual abuse. The time frame in which the alleged abuse took place ranged from 1967 to 1982.

These allegations involved six priests. At the time these allegations were reported (2005–2006), five of these priests were no longer in ministry. However, one was in active ministry and was placed on administrative leave.

2006 – 2007

During the fiscal year 2006–2007 there were seven new allegations of sexual abuse. The time frame in which the alleged abuse took place ranged from 1973 to 1991.

These allegations involved seven priests. At the time these allegations were reported (2006–2007), none of these seven priests were in ministry.

The Status of Settlements and Litigation against the Diocese of Joliet in the past two fiscal years

2005 – 2006 During this fiscal year, the settlement and related expenses were as follows:

a. Settlements (no lawsuits filed): \$303,000.00

This consisted of payments to five individuals with allegations against five different priests. None of these individuals had filed lawsuits.

b. Settlement of lawsuits – None

Although no lawsuits were settled during this fiscal year, negotiations had commenced on ten different cases which were not finalized until the following fiscal year.

c. Attorney's fees: \$366,490.00

This figure is the total of all attorneys' fees paid during the fiscal year in relation to pending litigation and for some services rendered in the prior year but deferred to this fiscal year.

2006 – 2007 During this fiscal year, the settlement and related expenses were as follows:

a. Settlements (no lawsuits filed): \$388,600.00

This consisted of payments to four individuals with allegations against five different priests. None of these individuals had filed lawsuits.

b. Settlement of lawsuits: \$1,122,505.00

There were a total of 15 lawsuits settled regarding allegations against six different priests

c. Attorneys' fees: \$216,474.00

This figure is the total of all attorneys' fees paid to two different law firms for all pending litigation during this fiscal year.

It is estimated that reimbursement from insurance companies should be no less than 50 percent of all the above payments.

Pending litigation

At the conclusion of the 2006–2007 fiscal year, two lawsuits were still pending against the Diocese of Joliet.

It is my sincere hope that the settlements paid by the diocese to individuals who were victims of child sexual abuse are a genuine sign of our commitment to assist in the healing process of those who have been harmed. We want to recognize our responsibility and reach out to those who have been victimized by clergy or others acting in the name of the Church. In this vein, we continue to offer and provide therapy to victims of abuse.

Having expressed my deep apology to the victims of sexual abuse, I also want to apologize to you, the parishioners of our diocese, who have been hurt, angered, and embarrassed by this tragic scandal. Perhaps your trust in the Church has eroded. For that I am deeply pained and sorry. One purpose of this report is to assure you that we are committed to continue our hard work toward ending and healing the scourge of sexual abuse. It is also my fervent prayer that our efforts will have a positive effect in family life and in the community at large.

I wish to express my strong support for the priests who serve in the Diocese of Joliet. It is important to affirm that they work tirelessly to provide spiritual and pastoral care to our people, whom they love and to whom they have committed their lives in the Lord. They, too, have been offended and pained by the sins of some of our brothers.

I am grateful for your prayers, questions, suggestions, and encouragement in the past 19 months. Be assured of my daily prayers for you and your loved ones, especially your children. I know that the Lord will continue to guide us along the ways of His wisdom and peace. May the Holy Family watch over us all, and may our Heavenly Father heal all hurts.



Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend J. Peter Sartain
Bishop of Joliet

If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by a member of the clergy or someone acting in the name of the Church, please contact:

- The Department of Children and Family Services 1-800-252-2873
- The Diocese of Joliet Victims Assistance Coordinator 1-815-263-6467
Mrs. Barbara Jarvis Pauls
- Any Law Enforcement Agency
- Or Write to:

	
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