



Diocese of Joliet

Office of the Bishop

425 Summit St.
Joliet, Illinois 60435

June 11, 2003

Dear Friends,

The tragedy of sexual abuse of minors has done terrible damage to the Church. Serious harm has been caused to victims of abuse and their families. I apologize with my whole heart to the victims, their families and all those whose lives or faith have been damaged by abuse.

In order to ensure that our policy on abuse was in conformity with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (USCCB, June 2002), an extensive review of our present policy was undertaken by a seven-member Independent Advisory Group after widespread consultation with many others in the diocese. Their work resulted in a revised diocesan policy entitled, *Pastoral Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors*.

The *Pastoral Policy* is intended to help protect against any future abuse by clergy or other individuals who act as agents of the Church. It is designed to ensure appropriate responses to allegations of sexual abuse received from minors and vulnerable adults. It also provides clear guidelines about ministering with compassion to the pastoral needs of victims, their families, the community and the accused. It assures compliance with all civil regulations and respect for the rights of both the accuser and the accused.

The Diocese has also prepared *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors* which defines the boundaries for persons having contact with children and young people.

Both documents will be widely distributed in parishes and will also be available at: www.dioceseofjoliet.org/protecting

A diocesan-wide educational program, (Virtus) *Protecting God's Children*, is being implemented. All who interact with children will learn the warning signs of inappropriate relationships, how programs are to be monitored, who are permitted to work with children, the importance of parental involvement, and how to communicate concerns about suspected abuse.

The Diocese of Joliet continues to believe that:

- ✦ Sexual abuse is a sin, a crime and destroys trust.
- ✦ Minors and vulnerable adults need protection from sexual abuse.
- ✦ Healing is important for the abused, their families and faith communities.
- ✦ Cooperation with parents, civil authorities and others helps maintain a safe environment.
- ✦ Background checks help protect all involved.
- ✦ Evaluation and education are necessary for those in Church ministry.
- ✦ Communication must be transparent, open and honest.

Please continue to pray for the safety of all of our children and the healing of all those who have been abused.

With every best wish,

Sincerely in Christ,


Most Reverend Joseph L. Imesch
Bishop of Joliet