



DIOCESE OF CAMDEN

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Contact: Andrew J. Walton
(856) 756-7900 ext. 5282

RESULTS OF U.S. BISHOPS' SURVEY RELEASED

Camden Diocese results show abuse cases have declined in last decade; Diocese pledges that care of victims will be an ongoing priority

CAMDEN (February 27, 2004) — A national survey commissioned by the United States bishops to determine the extent of sexual abuse of minors by clergy was released today. The United States bishops authorized the survey in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in order to “understand the problem more fully and to enhance the effectiveness of our future response.”

The quantitative survey based on data provided by most of the 195 U.S. dioceses was conducted by John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and covers the period from 1950 to 2002.

In a letter to parishioners published in today's *Catholic Star Herald*, the Diocese of Camden reported that 33—or 2.3 percent—of the 1,416 diocesan and religious order priests that have served in the diocese have had substantiated allegations of abuse made against them by 63 individuals.

Of the 33 priests, none is in active ministry: 10 are deceased, 21 have been permanently removed from ministry and two are being referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican for further instruction. Accusations against seven other priests were determined to be unfounded by the Diocesan Review Board, a majority lay board headed by retired Superior Court Judge Philip A. Gruccio.

Monsignor Thomas J. Morgan, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Camden, in a letter to parishioners called the sexual abuse of minors a sin and a crime and “a shameful betrayal of God and his people.”

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Bishops' survey released

Said Monsignor Morgan, "The failings of those in the Church are there for all to see but this is—we pray God—something of the past. We in leadership positions within the Church have asked—and continue to ask—for forgiveness. Not only must we continue to make the care of those who have been harmed in the past an ongoing priority but we must also respond to the future. (T)he lessons of the past have instilled in us a determination to assure that such an outrage never occurs again," he said.

Nearly 75 percent of the substantiated allegations date from the 1950s through the 1970s. The last reported incident of sexual abuse involving a priest of the Diocese of Camden occurred almost nine years ago, in 1995.

"There has been a marked decline in allegations over the last decade, in part due to the preventive measures put into place by most dioceses, including Camden, in the early 1990s. Yet, because even a single case of abuse is one too many, the diocese is committed to building on the strong preventive measures already in place while making sure victims receive the care that will help them heal," said Andrew Walton, spokesman for the diocese.

In January an independent audit conducted by former law enforcement officials found that the Diocese of Camden was in full compliance with the United States bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children & Young People*. The audit also formally commended the diocese for adopting programs for victims, including a support group and Clinical Advisory Panel which exists to make sure that victims are receiving care to meet their needs.

While virtually every segment of society has confronted the problem of sexual abuse of minors, the survey commissioned by the United States bishops is unprecedented.

"No other organization has invited the kind of scrutiny that the Church has with these reports," said Walton. "The hope is that while this examination of the past is painful, it will help the Church understand the problem better now and in the future so that young people are protected, victims are healed, and trust is restored in the Church."

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The Diocese of Camden serves 445,000 Catholics in 127 Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem County parishes. The diocese serves the South Jersey community through faith, education and social services.