

Special Report

Updated Sexual Misconduct Policy for the Diocese of New Ulm seeks a safe and secure environment for all its faithful

by Rev. Douglas L. Grams

The Diocese of New Ulm has, over the years, taken many steps to respond effectively to the issue of sexual misconduct in the Church.

In 1990, the diocese developed a system of advocates for victims. Also in 1990, a Diocesan Sexual Misconduct Policy was published and all clergy received training about sexual misconduct and boundary issues.

In 1994, a revised version of the policy was issued. Officials of the diocese have attended regional meetings of Catholic dioceses to discuss how the Church can better respond to sexual misconduct. On May 1, 2003, an updated Sexual Misconduct Policy was issued which is in compliance with the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,

National Audit

In September, two members of The Gavin Group, Inc. auditing firm assessed how the Diocese of New Ulm is implementing the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, adopted by the United States Catholic Bishops in June 2002. The Diocese of New Ulm was found to be in compliance with each of the Articles set forth in the Charter.

Audits of all 205 archdioceses and dioceses in the United States were scheduled to be completed by the end of October. The final summary report from the audits will be submitted to the Office for Child and Youth Protection, headed by Kathleen McChesney, Director of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops Office of Child and Youth Protection.

John Jay Study

Flowing from Article Nine of the Charter, the Bishops agreed to carefully assess the problem of sexual misconduct on the part of clergy.

Each diocese in the United States took part in an independent national study - the John Jay Study - in order to evaluate the size and the scope of the problem in U.S. dioceses.

The Diocese of New Ulm reported that:

- Since 1957, the year the diocese was formed, to the present, 305 priests have served in the diocese.

- During that time there have been twenty-five allegations of sexual abuse of minors involving twelve priests of the Diocese of New Ulm.

It is expected that a full report from the John Jay Study will be released by the end of December.

Financial Costs

The following summary sets forth the financial costs associated with clerical sexual abuse of minors in the Diocese of New Ulm since 1990.

- The diocese has paid \$63,921 for therapy and counseling to victims of sexual misconduct when they were minors.
- The diocese has paid \$4,261 for therapy for clerics who abused minors. (This amount is low because all of the alleged perpetrators are deceased or no longer serving as priests.)
- To date, the diocese has paid \$61,254 in legal costs.
- The diocese has paid \$429,500 in settlements to victims between 1992-1998. Insurers of the diocese have covered \$303,000 of those settlements. The remaining \$126,500 was paid by the diocese.

Background Checks

Flowing from Article 13 of the Charter, all of the priests, deacons and pastoral administrators who are serving in parishes in the Diocese of New Ulm submitted their names for criminal background checks and those results do not indicate any criminal behavior.

The Diocese of New Ulm continues to take steps to ensure that our children and young people are protected. Visit the diocesan web site www.dnu.org for further information about diocesan efforts to promote safe, healthy communities of faith; to effectively prevent misconduct; and to respond fairly and compassionately to those harmed by clerical sexual misconduct.

*Rev. Douglas L Grams is the Bishop's Delegate in Matters Pertaining to Clergy Sexual Misconduct. **If you or someone you know has been sexually exploited by a member of the clergy and you need to talk with someone about abuse, exploitation, or harassment, please contact the Diocese of New Ulm Victim Assistance Coordinator, or the Bishop's Delegate in Matters Pertaining to Sexual Misconduct by Clergy, 1400 6th Street North,*

New Ulm, MN 56073; phone: (507) 359-2966.