

COMPLIANCE AUDITS UPDATE

During the past several months, every Catholic diocese in the United States has participated in an audit of its policies and procedures for dealing with allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse by Church personnel. During the week of August 4, representatives of the Gavin Group, an independent agency selected by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, audited our archdiocese.

In early January, the results of all of the audits are scheduled to be released. We believe our archdiocese is in full compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms* and all provisions of civil and Church law. We welcome the report of the audit team.

At least a decade before I arrived as archbishop of Indianapolis in 1992, the archdiocese established a policy on handling allegations of sexual misconduct by persons working or ministering on behalf of the archdiocese. The archdiocese first published that policy in 1994 and then updated it again in 1996. Recently, we revised our policy to incorporate the provisions of the *Charter* and the *Essential Norms* adopted last year by the bishops in the United States. Our latest version of our policy, *To be Safe and Secure*, can be found by accessing our archdiocesan Web site at: www.archindy.org.

As previously reported, our archdiocesan policies and procedures provide for the support of victim-survivors and their families. We investigate all reports of sexual abuse or misconduct and, if appropriate, relieve the alleged offender promptly of any duties. We comply fully with Indiana law regarding the reporting of child abuse. We present the findings of all investigations to the Archdiocesan Review Board, which, in turn, makes recommendations to me based on its findings. We are committed to communicating openly with members of our Catholic community while at the same time respecting the privacy of everyone involved.

Please know that the first priority of the archdiocese is to serve and protect innocent children and minors. We have programs designed to educate and to try to prevent sexual misconduct in the future. These programs include education and counseling opportunities, “safe environment” programs, criminal background checks for all who have regular contact with minors, and better screening and evaluation techniques for seminarians, religious and lay employees and volunteers.

I once again would like to offer a profound apology to victim-survivors, especially those who we have not pastorally helped as effectively as we should have. In the name of Christ, the head of the Body of the Church, we who are leaders of the Church, the bishops, are responsible both for the care of the victim and for the removal of the perpetrator from ministry.

We also have an opportunity as a Church to provide education to society as a whole. We can utilize our ministry and social service programs to help society address the issue of sexual misconduct more effectively. Sexual misconduct is gravely sinful and contrary to

God's law. We pray that we continue to learn from our mistakes—not only by our Church but also by society in general. As I have listened to stories of people who have been abused, I am deeply saddened not only by the harm they have suffered but also by the betrayal of trust they feel.

Lastly, we once again urge people to come forward to report sexual misconduct by persons working or ministering on behalf of the archdiocese so that we can reach out to victim-survivors with pastoral care. Anyone who believes that he or she has been a victim—or who knows of anyone who has been a victim—of such misconduct should contact our assistance coordinator, Carla Hill, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-1410, 317-236-7325 or 800-382-9836, ext. 7325.

—Most Rev. Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B.
Archbishop of Indianapolis
November 5, 2003