



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER MEMORANDUM

Our Notes on Progress: Five Years of Healing and Growth

In many ways, the Catholic Church in New Hampshire in 2007 is the same as it was in 2002 and for decades before, but in significant ways it is different.

The Diocese of Manchester is more than an institution. We are the Catholic faithful living as disciples of the Lord. We are over 324,000 people from all over New Hampshire. We are members of over 100 parishes and dozens of Catholic schools. Together, we worship, teach, and serve others in Christ's name.

The practices of the Catholic Church in New Hampshire in 2007 are dramatically and measurably different than in 2002. We have learned difficult lessons about the abuse of minors and responded to hundreds of persons who were harmed in the past.

Many of those we helped have expressed their gratitude to us. We changed what we do because it has been the right thing to do.

- In 2002, only a few people recognized themselves as responsible for reporting the abuse of a minor by church personnel. Today, we all share responsibility for reporting suspicions to civil and church authorities.
- Today, clergy and laity — including a lay review board, social worker and professional investigator — review all reports of sexual abuse of a minor and collaborate in responding to persons who make reports, in determining if a minor was harmed, and in addressing the reported conduct with the accused person.
- Today, over 15,000 people in diocesan parishes, schools, and institutions, under the leadership of a professional child safety director, have been trained to know the warning signs of abuse and to report suspicions to authorities.
- Today, every report of the abuse of a minor to church officials, regardless of when it occurred, is reported to civil authorities.
- In February 2002, there was one assigned priest known to have abused a minor in the past. Today, there is no priest in ministry who has been credibly accused of abusing a minor.

These past five years have been painful, especially for survivors of sexual abuse and faithful Catholics, including the many fine priests who faithfully serve people well. Church leaders in New Hampshire have publicly acknowledged on numerous occasions that there were inadequate responses in the past to reports that a minor was sexually abused and we have changed what we do. The Diocese of Manchester — all of us — has responded to survivors by acknowledging their painful experiences, expressing our deep sorrow, and providing assistance sought from us. We have done so in a timely manner with respect for the persons who made reports and those who assisted them.

While no one can deny the pain of these past five years, all should recognize that our Church is safer today. Who we are continues; what we do has changed. The Catholic Church in New Hampshire is stronger today because of what we have learned and because we rely on the Lord.

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