

January 18, 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

On December 29, 2003, I was pleased to publish a revised policy for our Diocese for dealing effectively with sexual abuse in the Church. The policy, *Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal: The Protection of Children and Young People*, underlies our common commitment as a Church to the protection of children and young people. I am grateful to everyone who takes this responsibility seriously and works at making it part of our Catholic culture in New Hampshire.

The policy calls for the Diocesan Review Board to audit the Office for Ministerial Conduct's compliance with the policy. I asked the Board to also look at compliance in the parishes, schools and offices of the Diocese. Last week, I received the first audit report; it is available on our website, www.catholicnh.org. The Board retained an independent audit firm to conduct a comprehensive review of the Office for Ministerial Conduct and to visit several parishes and schools, all to measure compliance with the policy from its effective date on March 19, 2004 to December 31, 2004.

In summary, the report noted the following:

- that the Office for Ministerial Conduct is fulfilling all of its responsibilities as outlined in the policy;
- that the Office and the diocesan community at large are demonstrating our sincere commitment
 - ~ to prevent sexual abuse of minors in the Church;
 - ~ to respond with compassion and respect to persons who report being abused by church personnel;
 - ~ to report and to cooperate with civil authorities when there is reason to suspect the abuse of a minor; and
 - ~ to ensure due process and respect for the rights of those accused of sexual abuse;
- that all priests and permanent deacons assigned to ministry in our Diocese, and all diocesan administration employees, have fulfilled the policy's background screening and training requirements; and
- that while most parishes and Catholic schools visited were in substantial compliance and kept documenting results, some were not in complete compliance, leading to recommendations for the coordination of compliance

The report includes five recommendations that the Review Board believes will assist the Diocese in enhancing its commitment to protect children and young people, and in verifying consistent compliance with the policy throughout the diocese. I have accepted all five recommendations, one of which is to add a full-time compliance coordinator to the diocesan staff. This person will assist the Office for Ministerial Conduct in overseeing and assisting the parishes, Catholic schools, and diocesan offices and institutions in the ongoing implementation of the policy. The compliance coordinator will provide regular reports to me and to the Diocesan Review Board.

I thank the members of the Board for their service to our local church along with those who serve as safe environment coordinators or as members of the Safe Environment Council. I am grateful to all who

participate in the *Protecting God's Children* and *Safe and Sound All Around* training, and to everyone who complies with our background screening requirements.

Making this work our common responsibility can only contribute to the flowering of Christ's mission and ministry in our local church. Confident of God's goodness and in His faithful guidance of the Church, and grateful for your good efforts, I remain

Sincerely in Our Lord,
/s/ +John B. McCormack
Bishop of Manchester