A Historical Accounting
of Clergy Sexual Abuse of Minors
in the Albany Diocese
2% of Diocesan Priests Offended

Based on a review of available historical records, between 1950 and November 1, 2003, 121 individuals made allegations of sexual abuse against clergy affiliated with the Albany Diocese. Fifty-three Diocesan clergy, all but one of them priests, were accused. The Diocese or, since 1993, the Diocesan Sexual Misconduct Review Board found reasonable cause to believe the allegations against 18 of the accused priests — or 2 percent of the 814 Diocesan priests in service in the last 53 years.

None of the 18 priests is in active ministry today. They are not permitted to function publicly as priests, to celebrate Mass or other sacraments or hear confessions or to wear the clerical garb in public. Their status is as follows: 11 of the 18 priests have been removed from ministry; five have been placed on indefinite leave from ministry; two of the 18 priests are deceased.

Every Allegation Investigated

The Albany Diocese investigates every allegation of clergy sexual abuse of a minor. An independent private investigation firm headed by a retired senior investigator with the New York State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation conducts the investigations. Allegations against 15 current or former clergy are the subject of investigations at this time. Eleven of the 15 are not in active ministry: Three are deceased; four are on voluntary leave pending the outcome of these investigations, and four have resigned from the ministry. Four of the clergy have been permitted to remain in active ministry for now because reasonable cause to believe the allegations has not been established at this time and, based on a preliminary investigation, the priests are not a threat to the community.

If reasonable cause to believe the allegations is found, the active priests will be removed from ministry and the removals publicly announced. The Albany Diocese continues to follow this zero-tolerance policy: No priest or deacon whom the Diocese has reasonable cause to believe sexually abused a minor can remain in ministry.

Since 1950, 11 Diocesan priests were cleared after the complaints against them were investigated and determined to be unfounded. While each case is different, generally the accused priest was not working at the parish, school or other facility at the time he was accused of abusing a minor there.

No further action is possible at this time involving allegations against nine other priests or former priests. The Diocese does not have enough information to assess whether reasonable grounds exist to believe the allegations against these individuals. None is in active ministry: Seven are dead and two resigned from priestly ministry many years before the allegations were made against them. In these cases, generally, the allegation was made by an individual who declined to identify himself or herself or to be interviewed, or who did not or could not provide other information to support the allegations. In a few cases, third parties made the allegation and the alleged victim was deceased or unwilling or unavailable to cooperate in an investigation. The Diocese will consider any new information it receives on these cases.

During the 53-year period, the Diocese also received allegations from 20 individuals against 15 priests affiliated
with other dioceses or religious orders. The Albany Diocese referred these allegations for action to their respective dioceses or orders.

**Most Allegations from the 1960s and 1970s but Reported Recently**

Seventy percent of the alleged incidents were reported by victims to have occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. Nearly half of all of the allegations have been received by the Diocese in the last three years.

The occurrence of alleged abuse by decade is as follows: 50 percent of the incidents were alleged to have occurred in the 1970s, 20 percent in the 1960s, 19 percent in the 1980s, 8 percent in the 1950s, about 1 percent each in the 1990s and since 2000. The Diocese received the allegations as follows: 49 percent since 2000, 33 percent in the 1990s, and 9 percent each in the 1980s and 1970s.

The Albany Diocese insurance fund has provided $3,025,000 in compensation to the victims of clergy sexual abuse during the 53-year period. The insurance fund also covered $965,697 in counseling, legal and other costs associated with clergy sexual abuse issues since 1950. More than 80 percent of that sum was spent to provide counseling for victims and priests.

The premiums for Diocesan insurance coverage — like most other Diocesan programs and services — are paid through parishioners’ contributions to their parishes. No funds specifically contributed to the Bishop’s Appeal, Capital Campaign or other dedicated programs were or are used to pay settlements or other expenses related to sexual abuse cases.

This accounting is based on our review of historical information up to 53 years old. We have done our best to make a full and fair accounting based on the information available to us today.

**A Sacred Trust Violated**

I am profoundly saddened and disturbed by the number of our Diocesan priests who were found to have sexually abused a minor over the last 53 years. Some of the allegations against other priests, for which reasonable cause has not been found, may nevertheless be valid. It is also possible that not all victims of clergy sexual abuse have yet come forward. Abuse of minors is a grave sin and a serious crime, a reprehensible violation of trust by a priest who is called to be a witness of Christ’s love on Earth and should strive to uphold the highest standard of moral conduct. It is also true that the vast majority of my brother priests have never offended in this way, have lived up to their vows and fulfilled their duties with great grace.

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**The Steps Our Diocese Has Taken So Far**

The Albany Diocese has fully embraced the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Here is what we have done so far:

- **Zero-Tolerance:** We have adopted and are enforcing the zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse of minors by clerics. This means that no Diocesan priest or deacon can remain in public ministry if the Diocese has found reasonable cause to believe the priest or deacon sexually abused a minor at any time. No priest or deacon whom the Diocese has reasonable cause to believe sexually abused a minor can be transferred into, out of or within the Albany Diocese.
• **Prevention**: Candidates for ministry are evaluated by medical professionals and screened by lay people to identify psychological issues and to assess psychosocial maturity, among other characteristics. We have adopted a comprehensive, step-by-step, Diocesan-wide plan for creating safe environments for minors and adults and implemented a policy for receiving, investigating and acting upon allegations of sexual abuse. We have set forth new protocols for all Diocesan employees to follow when they are with minors.

• **Removals**: I have removed from public ministry or placed on leave those priests for whom reasonable cause has been found to believe the allegations against them. We have granted voluntary leaves to priests while allegations against them are investigated. Since June 2002, consistent with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, these actions have been publicly reported to the news media and the community.

• **Investigations**: We investigate every sexual abuse allegation received by the Diocese. An allegation within the statute of limitations is immediately referred to local District Attorneys in line with a protocol developed by 12 local District Attorneys at the request of the Diocese. All other allegations are investigated by the independent private investigation firm retained by the Diocese. Reports of those investigations are presented to the Diocesan Sexual Misconduct Review Board for review and action.

• **Public Outreach**: We have published and broadcast advertisements in daily newspapers and on radio stations across the Diocese to encourage all victims of sexual abuse by a Catholic cleric to come forward for assistance.

• **Training**: We have trained more than 8,000 Diocesan employees and parish and school volunteers to spot signs of sexual abuse in minors and to create safe places for minors and adults.

• **Background Checks**: Diocesan employees and volunteers who work with minors now must consent to criminal background checks. Thus far, we have completed background checks on more than 2,000 employees and volunteers.

• **Victims’ Advocate**: We appointed a victim/survivor assistance coordinator to be an advocate for victims within the Diocese and to ensure that the Diocese provides full and coordinated assistance beneficial to victims and their families. Anyone with information about sexual abuse of a minor by a Catholic cleric is asked to call Theresa F. Rodrigues at (518) 453-6646 or to write her at victim.assistance@rcda.org.

• **Oversight by Lay People**: The Diocesan Sexual Misconduct Review Board reviews the reports of investigations into allegations of sexual abuse by clergy. The board, made up primarily of lay experts not employed by the Diocese, makes recommendations to me on appropriate action against clergy. The board membership has been expanded to include a sexual abuse victim.

• **No Confidentiality Agreements**: We have abandoned the use of confidentiality agreements in settlements with victims. We will honor a victim’s request to withhold his or her name when settlements are announced publicly but will report the aggregate dollar amount of all settlements annually.

• **Public Information**: We have posted our policies on sexual misconduct and the Charter and Norms adopted by the Catholic Bishops and approved by the Vatican on our Web site (www.rcda.org). We established a toll-free number (800-931-6058) to make information on this issue readily available to Catholics and other members of the public.

**What Our Diocese Will Do Next**

In the spirit of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Albany Diocese Sexual Misconduct Policy, I believe there is still more that our Diocese should do to fully and fairly recognize and ease the suffering caused by clergy sexual abuse. We have a moral obligation to assist victims of clergy sexual abuse, regardless of whether they have viable legal remedies or would seek to exercise them. Our goal ultimately must be to promote healing, reconciliation and peace.

While we are already providing counseling and other assistance to many victims who have come forward, I believe we should establish an overall program built on the fundamental principles of fairness and validation for victims. This program should provide an individualized response, including pastoral, spiritual and emotional care and the consideration of financial assistance. The Diocese will seek a respected, independent leader to develop and administer this program.

Promoting healing and preventing future abuse continue to be urgent priorities for me, for the Albany Diocese and for our church as a whole. I ask for your continued prayers and guidance.

Sincerely,

Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany

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We urge all victims of sexual abuse by a Catholic priest or deacon to contact us for help. Please call Theresa F. Rodrigues, our victims/survivors assistance coordinator, at (518) 453-6646 or write to her at victim.assistance@rcda.org.