

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

ANNUAL REPORT

for Child Protection and Victim Assistance

July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As your Bishop I am committed to ensuring that our activities for youth are safe and appropriate. My predecessor, Bishop Loverde, provided a firm foundation for which I am deeply grateful. I invite you to read our FY16 Annual Report which offers a summary of our activities to protect our young people.

The Offices for the Protection of Children and Young People and Victim Assistance will continue to work tirelessly to protect our children and to offer opportunities for the healing of victims and survivors. Please explore the diocesan website for more information about our safety programs and policies and as a resource for those who have been wounded by child sexual abuse (www.arlingtondiocese.org).

Our youth are especially close to Our Lord and the kingdom of God, as Jesus said: "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me" (Mt 18:5). May our Lord Jesus continue to watch over and guide us in this work that has been entrusted to us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Arlington

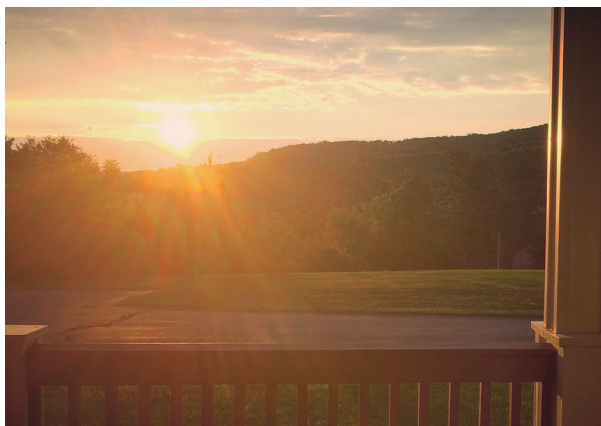
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History

The Aspect of Courage and Faith in the Journey of Healing

- 2002** The bishops adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which included a plan to safeguard our children and launch a new program to help victims and survivors.
- 2003** The diocesan Office of Victim Assistance was established to help victims and survivors heal from the suffering and pain of sexual abuse and violence.
- 2004** The first Mass to pray for victims and survivors of sexual abuse was celebrated on Wednesday, June 30, 2004 by Bishop Paul S. Loverde at the Cathedral of Saint Thomas More.
- 2016** Bishop Michael F. Burbidge was installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Arlington on December 6, 2016. His first Mass to pray for victims and survivors of sexual abuse was celebrated on February 22, 2017 at the Cathedral of Saint Thomas More.

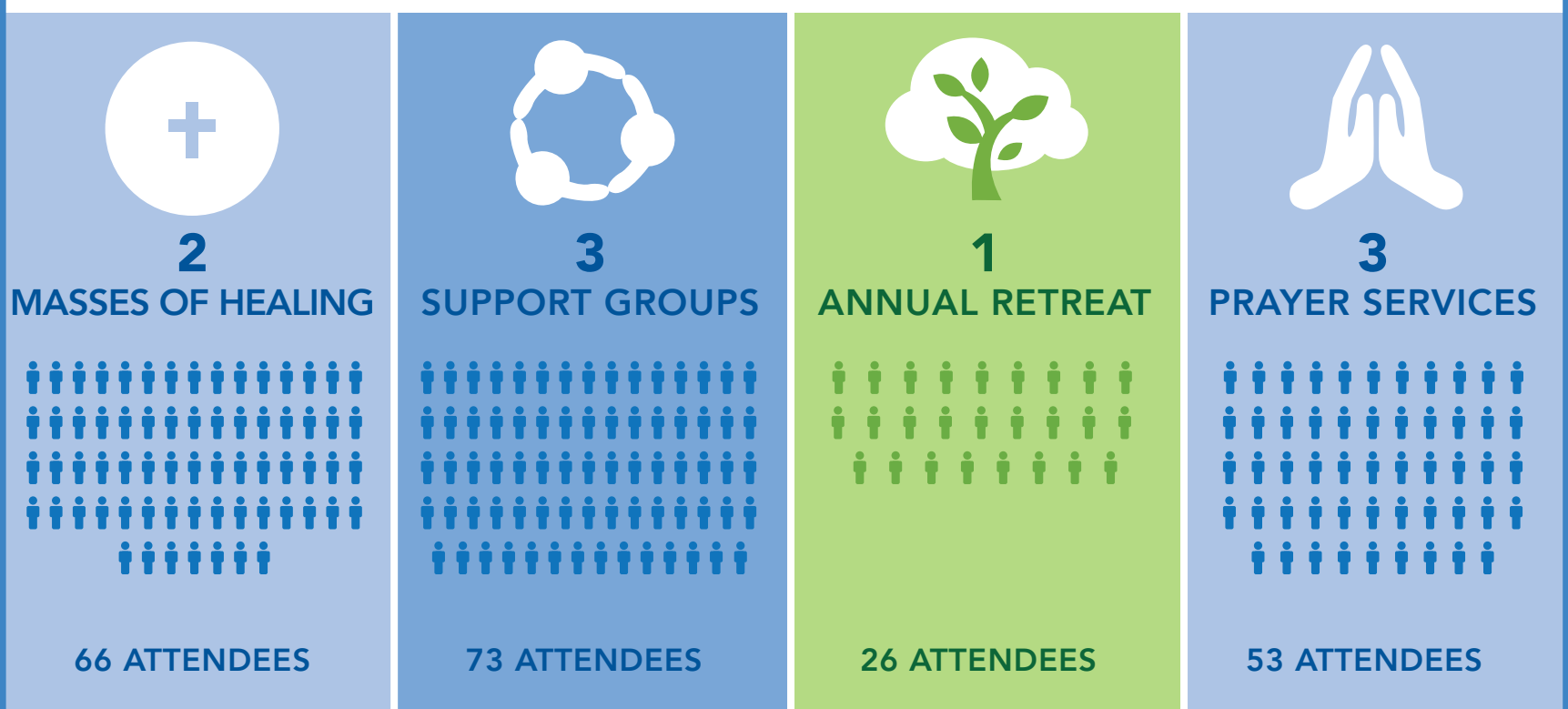


During the past audit year, the Diocese has not received any credible allegation of sexual abuse.

Bishop Loverde and Bishop Burbidge presided at the Masses and directed the support groups. Bishop Loverde directed the September retreat. His homily included an apology to the victims and survivors for the pain they suffered. Both Bishop Loverde and Bishop Burbidge promised their prayers for healing and made a commitment to support the victims and survivors on their journey.


Father Thomas Ferguson, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, presides at the prayer services, support groups and retreat. Father Ferguson, along with Bishop Burbidge, develops the program of support for victims and survivors in the Diocese of Arlington.

Year in Review



JULY 1, 2015–JUNE 30, 2016

To learn more, visit: arlingtondiocese.org/victimassistance



Testimony: "Hope, Trust and Mercy"


We are all here today because we have been honest with ourselves and at least one other person. We knocked on the door of hope, and it was opened to us. Hope that our silent pain, internal suffering, and most of all, that our voices will be heard, believed and respected. Hope brought us here, keeps us coming back, and ignites our hearts to believe that in the midst of our heartache, we can find the good that God has planned for us.

God will never let good people topple into ruin, and we are all good people, children of God. Since we are all children of God, we must learn to rebuild the trust that was shattered in our youth. Trust is something that is earned, step by step. It takes time to rebuild a new foundation of trust, and that is OK. When I first started attending the prayer services, support group meetings and retreats, my attendance was very sporadic. I was not sure I needed it, was ready for it, had time for it, and if I would feel safe in it.

I will tell you that even with hope and trust with us on our journey, there will be dark days ahead. What do I do in these times? I remind myself of the spark of light within me, the hope I desperately cling to. I light a small votive candle and place it so as to remind me of God's living light inside my heart!

I struggle the most with mercy. I always thought that to show mercy was to forgive. I now know that is not true. While reading a book titled *Beautiful Mercy*, one of the authors, Jackie Francious-Angel, wrote about mercy when she said: "It wasn't until recently, when I heard a priest's homily about mercy that I finally had a concrete definition to apply to my thoughts and actions in daily living. The priest broke down the Latin word for mercy, which is *misericordia*, derived from the two words *miserere*, meaning pity or misery, and *cor*, meaning heart. He then said that when we ask for God's mercy, we are asking Him to relieve us of a heart that is in misery." As we all know, our hearts can be in a state of misery from so many things—not just sin, but so many other heartaches.

This has opened a new door in my heart. Though I equated mercy with forgiveness, I never felt that I deserved it: not from Jesus, Mary or anyone, for that matter. This is one of the hallmarks of our struggle: the complexity of the unfounded shame, blame and guilt we so easily place upon ourselves. Hope, trust and mercy are the gifts of this program. Our fellowship and camaraderie shared in mercy brings relief to hearts that are in misery. We are stronger, better equipped and fortified through His mercy by His grace. God bless you all.



Testimony: "Light in the Darkness"

"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Ps 27:1). Believing Him present in each of us, here and now, I turn to Him in others, to offer and to find His love. For many unspoken reasons the vulnerable child I was became a victim of abuse at the hands of not clergy, not family, but strangers. The God I once knew seemed impossible to find, and peace was only a word—with no meaning at all. As the darkness surrounded me, my victimhood made me a prisoner of self-hate. My story of sexual abuse had long been a shameful secret in my life. Blaming others for my failures and disappointments only got me deeper into emotional debt. I had to find help to remove my blinders and to see what the Lord desired of me. I needed to acknowledge His forgiveness and healing.

Fortunately, there are many signs in the world of God's love, the diocesan program being one light in the darkness. Although I had often sought personal help over the years from counselors and in the confessional, a clean conscience did not help with other demands of reality and society. I knew that isolation was not the answer to healing my pain. I needed to meet and pray with and for other victims of abuse. It is clear why I turned to this support group. It is uniquely centered on the Lord and is a community seeking to bring its members to wholeness through forgiving the institutions and humanity's shortcomings. I discovered in this group a promise of trust. I am free to tell the truth. Admitting my victimhood in this safe and anonymous way, I found means to grasp the peace and grace I need to live a meaningful life centered on Jesus.

At this fountain of mercy, we drink deeply and are strengthened to journey beyond our sorrows, helping others to carry their sorrows, too. Once we have claimed healing, we no longer need to consider ourselves victims. Survivors, yes! We may also claim to be victorious in Christ (1 Cor 15:57)! We no longer seek to blame and excuse, but to realize the power and glory of Jesus in all things. May you find and continually walk in this Way, relying on Jesus to lead your steps in the Way that Pope Francis has called "the path of merciful love".

What We Offer



PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING

- We have established a list of therapists from the various geographical areas within the Diocese.
- All professionals have expertise in the field of abuse. Most therapists are Catholic, but we have some who are not, in order to give the victims flexibility to choose someone with whom they would be comfortable speaking.



MASSES TO PRAY FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Led by Bishop Burbidge, Masses are offered three times each year and are open to the public.
- Seeking to support the faith journey that follows abuse, we offer information and solace to survivors or loved ones after each Mass.



SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

- The Diocese has a list of priests and religious sisters who are trained in psychological and spiritual issues and are available to provide spiritual guidance to victims.



SUPPORT GROUPS

- The Diocese offers three meetings a year which include dinner and time for participants to discuss topics relating to their healing journey. Bishop Burbidge and Father Ferguson attended and prayed with the victims for their healing from the pain of sexual abuse.



PRAYER

- Prayer services, open to the public, are offered throughout the Diocese as outreach three times each year.
- A testimony is given by a victim or survivor to share their story and efforts to heal from abuse.



ANNUAL RETREAT

- The Diocese offers a daylong retreat to assist victims and survivors in their healing.
- Retreat leaders are drawn from those trained to be spiritual guides, leading attendees to inspire each other with stories of faith.

Protecting Our Youth: Proactive Education & Training

by Deacon Marques Silva, Office of Child Protection & Safety

In 1991, the Diocese of Arlington began the implementation of a structured and proactive program for the prevention of child sexual abuse. Today, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge continues to direct the diocesan programs and policies that safeguard our children in every youth activity throughout the Diocese. The *Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct* is our Diocese's comprehensive and systematic program designed to protect children. This policy guides our programs and is in full accord with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

Over the last year, the Office of Child Protection and Safety (OCPS) continued its commitment to assist every diocesan location in providing a safe environment for youth and adults through education and training. In addition, background checks were conducted for all employees and volunteers who have substantial contact with children.

In an effort to update these services, OCPS chose to:

- Train nine additional facilitators for the *Virtus: Called to Protect* training seminars;
- Review the pornography research and statistics used by diocesan speakers; and
- Research the prevalence of unknown adults having access to minors and the use of violence and pornography in video games.

As a result of these activities, OCPS:

- Provided four *Teens & Tech* training presentations to diocesan parishes;
- Produced *Understanding the Threats in Cyberspace: A Summary on the Impact of Pornography*;
- Produced *An Introduction to Social Media & Our Youth*, a statistical guide for parents; and
- Produced *Video Games & Youth*, a paper to assist parents in making healthy decisions for their teens.

The faithful assistance of the thousands of diocesan volunteers and employees who work with young people continues to be the strongest asset in the protection of our children. Please join us in our mission to provide a safe environment to all children entrusted to our care and to assist each child to grow in grace and wisdom.

Did You Know . . .

- From July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, more than **3,900** adult employees and volunteers received *Protecting God's Children* training.
- More than **57,000** employees and volunteers have received *Protecting God's Children* training since its introduction in 2004.
- From July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, an average of **460** background checks were completed each month.

To learn more, visit: arlingtondiocese.org/child-protection