

ANNUAL CHILD PROTECTION REPORT 2012-2013

DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

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July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2013

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PROTECTING OUR YOUTH: PROACTIVE EDUCATION & TRAINING

The Diocese of Arlington, in 1991, commenced a structured and proactive program for the prevention of child sexual abuse. Bishop Paul S. Loverde continues to improve diocesan programs and policies that safeguard our youth in youth activities 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 diocesan programs and is in full accord with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

During Fiscal Year 2013, 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 that have substantial contact with children.

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

- Update its training for parish/school child protection liaisons;
- Review and provide edits for a full review of the adult safe-environment training video; and
- Train an additional six facilitators for the *Virtus: Called to Protect* training seminars.

As a result of these activities, OCPS:

- Provided updated training for 35 parish/school child protection liaisons;
- Participated in a study group to revise the adult safe-environment training video; and
- Accomplished the goal of ensuring multiple facilitators in all seven diocesan deaneries.

The faithful assistance of the thousands of diocesan volunteers and employees who work with young people continues to be the strongest diocesan asset that prevents harm to our children.

Please join us in our mission to provide a safe environment by continuing your education. Visit our webpage to view our current policy and additional resources to help protect God's children at www.arlingtondiocese.org/childprotection.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR'S REPORT DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

*Report covers the Audit Period
July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013*

As directed in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* developed by the USCCB in June 2002 and revised in 2011, and based on Bishop Loverde's concern for the individuals and families of this diocese, our office is charged with providing healing and reconciliation to victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse and their families. As stated in the Charter, Dioceses throughout the United States are to "reach out to victims/survivors and their families and demonstrate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-



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being. The first obligation of the Church with regard to the victims is for healing and reconciliation.” To offer the most assistance to our victims/survivors, a learned best practice is to encourage a combination of competent therapy and spiritual assistance to enhance their progress through their journey of healing. In addition to situations involving church personnel, we also provide assistance to victims of incest and sexual abuse in other contexts.

We would like to personally thank Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde, Bishop of Arlington, Reverend Mark S. Mealey, O.S.F.S., Vicar General for Administration and Moderator of the Curia, Deacon Marques Silva, Director of the Office of Child Protection and Safety, and the members of the Review and Advisory Boards for their commitment and dedication to protecting our children and assisting our victims/survivors in this diocese.

During Fiscal Year 2013, the Office of Victim Assistance received 53 calls seeking assistance. Among the 53 calls, one involved an allegation of clergy abuse by a religious order

priest outside of our diocese. Forty-five people sought assistance that have been abused through incest, boundary violations or in other non-church contexts, and approximately seven calls were from members of the community seeking assistance not related to sexual abuse issues.

Our Victim Assistance Coordinators continue to provide referrals for therapy and spiritual assistance, invitations to the Support Groups and Annual Retreat for victims/survivors and a support person, and information on our Healing Masses and Prayer Services. Since 2002, we directed assistance to a total of 444 victims/survivors, family members, and support persons.

Healing Masses and Prayer Services to Pray for Healing for Victims/Survivors - During this audit period three Healing Masses were held in our diocese at Our Lady of Hope, Potomac Falls; Saint Michael, Annandale; and Good Shepherd, Alexandria. Bishop Loverde was the presider. Over the past 9 years, a total of 37 Masses have been celebrated with an estimated 2,700 people in attendance.

Prayer Services to Pray for Healing for Victims/Survivors – During this audit period three Prayer Services were held in our diocese at Saint Lawrence, Alexandria, Saint Isidore the Farmer, Orange, and Saint Francis de Sales, Kilmarnock. These services were initiated to assist victims/survivors of abuse who found it difficult to attend Mass. Rev. Mark S. Mealey, O.S.F.S., celebrated these services throughout our diocese. Since 2005, we have had 26 Prayer Services with an estimated 414 people in attendance. During the Prayer Service, a victim/survivor shares testimony on their healing journey.

Both the Healing Masses and Prayer Services are ways in which those in attendance can gather together as a community to pray for healing for all victims of abuse and their families. Additional information is provided at each of these services and a reception follows for those gathered who would like to meet with Bishop Loverde, Father

Mealey, and other diocesan staff.

Support Groups for Victims/Survivors – Bishop Loverde has hosted 25 Support Group Meetings at the Dominican Retreat House in McLean. The meetings begin with prayer and a shared meal between the victims/survivors, Bishop Loverde, and diocesan staff.

During the meeting we remind all participants of the confidential nature of the gatherings, so that all may share their ideas safely. The diocesan staff participates as quiet listeners during the group discussion with our members sharing their thoughts and concerns. The group has agreed not to discuss specific details of their abuse so as not to trigger any of the members. Victims/survivors share their pain from the abuse and their efforts to heal. As the evening draws to a close, Bishop Loverde and Father Mealey express their sorrow to victims/survivors for the abuse they have suffered, remind all of God’s love for them, and share their insight about the group discussion. Bishop and Father also reassure victims/survivors that the abuse was not their fault. Our meeting ends with an evening Prayer Service in the Chapel. Since 2005, an estimated 483 people have participated in these groups. The evenings permit victims/survivors to support one another and to receive the support, prayers, and concern for healing from Bishop Loverde, Father Mealey, and the Victim Assistance Coordinators.

From a perspective of over 10 years now, we have come to believe that victims/survivors who participate over time in a combination of good therapy, prayer, spiritual guidance, and Support Groups can achieve healing and reconciliation with their Church and the faith of their childhood.

Our Support Groups and Retreats have come to be some of the most powerful services provided by the diocese.

Annual Retreat – Our 4th Annual Retreat was held at Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church on September 15, 2012. The retreat theme was

DID YOU KNOW IN FY13 THAT:

- Over 4,700 adult employees and volunteers received “Protecting God’s Children” training
- Over 41,000 employees and volunteers have received “Protecting God’s Children” training in the diocese since its introduction in May 2004
- More than 5,800 employees and volunteers underwent background checks
- More than 44,000 diocesan employees and volunteers of the Diocese have completed these checks since August 2004
- Since the program began in 2005, over 68,000 children have received “Formation in Christian Chastity” training

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“Disciples of Christ: The Crucifixion and The Upper Room,” presented by Fr. Mark S. Mealey, O.S.F.S., and was well received by all in attendance. Father Mealey included a history of the chapel in the parish as well as the founder of the Oblates, Blessed Louis Brisson, who was beatified in the Cathedral of Troyes, France, on September 22, 2012.

Victims/Survivors Planning Group – Since March of 2007, the Survivors Planning Group has met to share the perspective of victims/survivors with our program staff. The group has helped our victims/survivors take ownership of this program and given them an avenue to make suggestions to help others with their healing. During this audit period, they again participated in training programs for seminarians, priests, and nuns who provide spiritual guidance to victims and the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

It is our hope and desire that we continue to provide compassionate outreach to all who seek healing from abuse. Please continue to join us in praying for all victims/survivors of abuse and their families, that they might find healing as well as the way back to their rightful place in the Catholic Church.

Submitted by Adlin deCardi, M.A., L.M.F.T., and Patricia Mudd, M.S.W., A.C.S.W.

FINDING MYSELF IN A PLACE OF SAFETY

Surfing the net, looking for someone or something to help as I teetered on the edge of obliteration, I came across the Arlington Diocese Victim Assistance Program. I read what they had on their website, including a very warm and apparently caring letter from Bishop Loverde (that I didn't, couldn't believe – not yet), and I did something totally insane. I called and talked to a woman by the name of Pat Mudd. Honestly, I don't remember a thing that was said. I only remember a vague sense of promised safety. And then I did nothing for 2 years. I couldn't wrap my head around asking

for help from the very same church that had so shattered me so many years ago. What happened had caused me to leave the church for a long, long time. As I wandered looking for a safe place to be with God, I tried to make sense of what had happened. Though I had made some sense out of a childhood that no child, no human should ever have to endure, I could make no sense whatsoever out of a priest violating someone as they confessed to a sin that really wasn't theirs to confess. My church had always been my safe haven and now she was, well, not.

Flash forward two years and yet again I found myself in a place of desperation. I decided to give the Victim Assistance Program another chance. This time, I tried going to a prayer service that was miles and miles away from my home. Terrified, I sat in the parking lot of the church for quite a while willing my legs to move, finally crying out for help from whomever might be listening and then, miraculously, I found the courage to walk in. Of course the first two people I saw happened to be priests and I almost turned right around and walked back out the door, but this kindly lady stopped me with a gentle hello and welcomed me in. She told me they would be starting in just a moment. I decided to sit as far back in the church as possible, hidden in the shadows, near a door should I need to escape. That was the first time I had prayed in a church in over 20 years and it felt good. Then the service began. The speaker started by saying she knew that exactly the right people were there. And my tears started. I don't remember who said what after that, all I remember were my tears streaming down my face, speaking to the pain and the horror that had been held inside for so long, happy that I was too far away for anyone to notice what was happening. That is except for the kindly lady. She gave me my space for a while and then came over to see if I was alright, her eyes brimming over with empathy. Having learned to never show my pain or fear to others, but finding myself in a place of safety (really?), the tears started anew. And Pat Mudd gave me the space to just be.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bilingual Healing Mass to Pray for Healing for Victims/Survivors of Sexual Abuse

Tuesday June 17, 2014

Mass at 7:30 p.m.

Saint Mary of the
Immaculate Conception Church
1009 Stafford Avenue
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401

Bishop Paul S. Loverde to preside.

Support Group Evening with Bishop Loverde

Bishop Loverde cordially invites victims/survivors of sexual abuse and their spouse or support person to a Support Group meeting on Monday, May 12, 2014.

Dominican Retreat
7103 Old Dominion Drive
McLean, Virginia 22101

The evening begins at 5:45 p.m., ends by 9:00 p.m., and includes a light meal, discussion, and prayer service. Due to the nature and sensitivity of the meeting, this group is open to victims/survivors and their spouse or support person only.

Please RSVP by May 8
to (703) 841-2530.

For further information
on our services,
please visit our website at
www.arlingtondiocese.org
under Outreach and then
Victim Assistance.

It has been three years since the prayer service. I've gone to Healing Masses, Support Nights with Bishop Loverde, Prayer Services with Father Mealey, and Spiritual Retreats. These helped give me the courage to begin working with my parish priest (a truly holy and Godly man, a safe priest). I've returned to my

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church. I am receiving Her sacraments. I am raising my children with Her graces. I teach Religious Education classes to Her young. I proclaim the Word of God to Her people. I am still struggling with my demons, but now I do not struggle alone. The people who run this

program, the people who participate with this program are lifesavers. They have saved me over and over again. They give me hope, they loan me their courage when mine has run out. They listen with a knowledge that no one should have and they freely give of their

hard earned successes. I still have a long way to go. And that is okay. I no longer have to travel alone.

Submitted by a survivor of abuse who wishes to remain anonymous.

BE NOT AFRAID FOR HE IS WITH YOU

I remember my innocent heart. I remember what it felt like to be a little girl in love with Jesus, wanting to marry him. I remember wanting to save myself for him. I remember the day that changed my life forever. I remember the day I went from feeling worthy to feeling so unworthy of His Love. I was six years old when I became a victim of sexual abuse. My mother questioned what I must have done to make that man, a family acquaintance, do that to me. Just eight short years later, I became a victim of incest that lasted for three years and again, she questioned the same thing, wondering what I had done to make her husband, my father, take my virginity and sexually abuse me for three years. In her world, I had become the "other woman." I was left to my own defenses to heal from these unspeakable wounds to my body and soul.

For most of my adult life I have been dealing with the aftermath of being sexually abused. It has been a painful yet rewarding journey with many, many angels who have helped me along the way. There were many times when I felt like giving up. I felt as though nothing could give me reprieve from the deep, etching agony in my soul. I could not understand why God would allow such terrible things to happen to a child; why would he let someone steal my childhood and innocence. I would ask countless times, "Why ME, God?" Growing up, I felt dirty, ashamed, unloved, and unlovable. I wondered how God could possibly love me after what had happened to me, and especially after all the terrible things I had done over the years trying to escape my pain.

My healing journey has all the hallmarks we share as victims and survivors, like being afraid to tell, feelings of unfathomable shame, guilt, anger, and so much more. A time came in my life when I knew I could not keep the secret any longer, I had to break the silence, no matter how painful it might be. Much to my surprise, once I did start telling others, I experienced a sense of relief in the validation that the abuse was not my fault and I was not alone. It was a shaky start, much like a baby taking their first steps; that's how it is on our healing journey, one small step at a time. After 20 plus years of counseling on and off, I knew the time had come to repair and rebuild my wounded childhood spirituality. I had to knock on the door

of my relationship with God to understand His Why then learn to trust in His infinite wisdom.

When I finally talked to a priest about my life, and the sexual abuse, he explained to me that my spiritual life froze at the moment of my abuse in my childhood; nothing could ever be the same. And it was this Spiritual Iceberg, with so much frozen and buried, that directed my actions for several decades. I understand that now more than ever.

I attended a Lenten Healing Service at my church where my life changed dramatically. Through the prayers and songs I was finally able to understand what it meant to be a child of God. For most of my life I have held a lonely emptiness in my soul longing for the love and nurturing of my real parents. For the longest time I would not let go of the hope that someday things would be different. On this day, God was able to touch my heart in a way that made me fully understand that above all else I am HIS daughter, and no matter what HE loves me endlessly. I am HIS daughter, HIS creation, and it is HIS desire for me to know HIM, love HIM, trust HIM and open my heart to HIS love.

With those shaky baby steps I started on a new path of my healing journey when I reached out to the Victim Assistance Program at the Diocese of Arlington. I was not sure if the group was the right place for me, as I was not abused by a priest or any other member of the Catholic Church. However, at my first meeting with Pat Mudd, I was completely reassured that I was more than welcome; the door was open to all victims and survivors of sexual abuse.

It has taken me awhile to defrost and warm up to the caring, genuine, sincere support of Bishop Loverde, Father Mealey, Pat, and Adlin at the Victim Assistance Program. Every time I attend a Support Group Meeting, a Healing Service, or the annual Spiritual Retreat, I am reminded of how deeply they do care and of the immeasurable love that God has for me, and all of His children. Jesus and His Holy Mother Mary understand our suffering in ways few on earth could possibly understand. I invite you along with all my healing brothers and sisters, to take that first step toward your healing. Be not afraid for He is with you. God Bless You.

Submitted by a survivor of abuse who wishes to remain anonymous.