

For Immediate Release

Contact: Jim Wharton
Director of Communication
712-233-7556
jimw@scdiocese.org

DIOCESE RELEASES DATA ON SEXUAL ABUSE ISSUE

INFORMATION COVERS LAST 53 YEARS

Jan. 6, 2004 – Sioux City, IA: The Diocese of Sioux City today released data that provides specific details on the issue of sexual abuse of minors dating back to 1950. Parishioners were given the information in a letter last week to 36,000 households from Bishop Daniel N. DiNardo. The release of the information is consistent with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) mandate that dioceses be transparent in communication about the issue of abuse of minors. Parishioners in the diocese received a letter from Bishop DiNardo last week

The data indicates that the Diocese of Sioux City has received 33 allegations of sexual abuse of a minor against 10 priests of the diocese during the past 53 years.

None of the priests involved in any of these allegations remain in public ministry. Of the 10 priests identified, six have died, one has left the priesthood, one is living in a supervised setting and two have had their priestly duties suspended with the potential of further canonical penalties. The ten priests represent 1.8% of the 545 priests and deacons who have served the Diocese of Sioux City during the period.

Bishop DiNardo said that even one allegation against a priest is troubling. “I wish to convey my deep sorrow once again for any incident of abuse. On behalf of the people of our diocese, I express my sincerest apologies for all wrongs that were done so many years ago. I am personally committed to working with any victim and encourage anyone who has questions or concerns to contact me directly at the Central Catholic offices at 712-255-7933 or the Victim Assistance Coordinator at 712-279-5610 or 866-435-4397.”

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The diocese also released the financial report related to the handling of the abuse cases. Since 1950, a total of \$235,061 has been spent on settlements, treatment and counseling for victims and priests. Of that total, \$43,790 has been covered by insurance with the diocese assuming the remaining \$191,271.

Those costs came from unrestricted endowment earnings and donations made to the diocese. No funds that were designated for other church-related purposes such as D.A.A., A Time to Remember, and Centennial Campaign for Excellence, or weekend mass collections were used to pay any of those costs.

Bishop DiNardo also indicated that a number of pro-active initiatives are now underway across the diocese to deal aggressively with issues of sexual abuse.

All parishes in the diocese have received three important documents that direct the church and its activities going forward. They include the updated *sexual abuse policy for clergy*, the *code of ethical standards for lay people* and the newly developed *policy on background checks* for all employees and those volunteers who deal with children. Each of the documents is posted on the diocesan website www.scdiocese.org or may be picked up at any Catholic church in the diocese, or the Central Catholic offices at 1821 Jackson Street in Sioux City.

In addition to the new policy initiatives, the Diocese of Sioux City has also aggressively implemented a program designed to create safe environments for children. VIRTUS is a nationally recognized training program that is being used by all four dioceses in Iowa. Every priest, deacon, employee and volunteer who works with or around children is required to participate in the training. As of today, nearly 4,000 individuals in the Diocese of Sioux City have successfully completed their VIRTUS training. It is anticipated that the first round of training will be completed within a few weeks.

As the year comes to a close, Bishop DiNardo stressed once again his determination to bring healing and provide pastoral assistance to those who may have been abused by a priest. "There is no job more important than the protection of our children," said Bishop DiNardo. "We will continue to work diligently to ensure we have taken every precaution to make sure that happens. I regret any of our past abuses and encourage those who seek help to advise us of that need."