

Notes from St. Christopher Parish Meeting Regarding the Abuse Scandal
9/22/03

The meeting began with a short prayer service at 7:00 PM.

Afterwards, Fr. **Joseph Binzer** Chancellor, and Dr. **Charles Handel** Psychologist, introduced themselves and then asked parishioners what are some general areas of concern they would like addressed in the meeting. The following areas of concern were raised and then discussed over the course of the meeting.

1) What can we tell our children about trusting adults in the wake of the abuse scandal?

Dr. **Handel** and certain parishioners spoke on the need to talk to children about what constitutes proper and improper behavior on the part of adults. They emphasized that children should be encouraged to trust certain adults but to also be aware of actions that are never ok. Children should be wary of adults who urge them to keep secrets from their parents. Most abuse is committed by people known to the children and their families.

2) What's being done to prevent these things from happening in the future?

Fr. **Binzer** described the full extent of psychological testing that is now conducted with seminarians along with fingerprinting and background checks. He spoke about the thoroughness of the testing but emphasized that no amount of testing can always ensure that abusers will not emerge from the seminary. It is felt that everything possible is being done to ensure the integrity of the candidates for the priesthood. He also talked about the newly revised Decree on Child Protection and its implementation throughout the archdiocese. The Decree contains procedures designed to prevent child abuse and to ensure that it is reported properly when it occurs.

3) How are decisions made in regards to these matters?

Fr. **Binzer** described the process for substantiating an allegation of abuse. He mentioned that in recent cases, all of the accused priests admitted the allegations were true. He talked about the request that some victims have made not to have their situations disclosed and how grand jury proceedings can assure the anonymity of the victims. In Fr. **Kelley's** case, Fr. **Binzer** stated that there were no substantiated allegations made until 1994 and that these were from Fr. **Kelley's** assignment in Cincinnati before he came to St. Christopher in 1984. A parishioner later stated that it appeared the archbishop tried to impede the prosecutor's investigations and did not readily release church records when requested to do so by the prosecutor. Fr. **Binzer** stated that the archdiocese wanted to ensure the anonymity of victims who had requested it and that the requested information was eventually released.

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I-TEAM DISCLAIMER:

Using dates, titles and Catholic directories, the I-Team has filled in the names of priests and Archdiocese officials. These changes are noted in red. The names were removed from the original documents before they were filed in courts in January 2005.