




The Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington
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• CHANCERY OFFICE

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Pastors and Administrators

FROM: Fr. John J. McDermott, Chancellor 

RE: Pastoral Letter from Bishop Matano

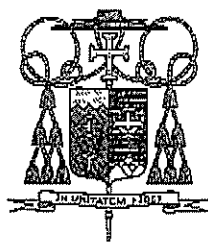
DATE: May 16, 2008

Bishop Matano has written a pastoral letter to the faithful of the Diocese of Burlington addressing the recent verdict in the civil trial against the Diocese.

Pastors and Administrators are asked to make this letter, along with the accompanying Safe Environment information, known to your parishioners by either reading the letter from the pulpit or having copies of the letter available in your churches.

If you have any questions about this you may contact me on my cell phone, 802-999-0832.

Thank you for your cooperation in this very important matter.

**BISHOP'S OFFICE**

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May 16, 2008

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As you painfully are aware, the verdict rendered in the just completed sexual misconduct case before the civil court resulted in an \$8,700,000 award to the plaintiff. Naturally, this causes great consternation among the faithful. Thus, I felt compelled to communicate with you.

I first wish to express my deep regret for the hurt endured by the plaintiff and on behalf of the Diocese I sincerely apologize to him that one chosen to be God's servant betrayed a sacred trust and so wounded him and other victims of abuse. Again, I apologize to these victims. I pray one day we will meet and achieve reconciliation.

Regarding the verdict, as it stands, it requires serious consideration regarding how the Diocese can charitably, justly and effectively bring to a resolution this difficult and tragic situation, dating back in history but requiring resolution today. Possible alternatives are being considered and evaluated which present reasonable options for dealing with this heavy burden and taking into account all who are affected by this judgment, namely the victims, the faithful of our Diocese in parishes, health care facilities, schools and all who seek our assistance when in need or troubled. I do not wish in any way to inflict further suffering or pain upon the victims or upon the faithful of this Diocese because of what happened in the past. Mindful that I am the Shepherd of all the faithful, I, therefore, must be conscious of our diocesan and

parochial needs and remain attentive to our brothers and sisters in need who seek our support through our charitable agencies. I pray that our mission continues with faith and enthusiasm.

Certainly today the Diocese has an expansive Safe Environment Program which seeks to do all that is possible to protect our children and to ensure that all who work with children are dedicated to their safety and protection. Education about this vital issue has taken place and continues to take place among our priests, deacons, religious, teachers and parish volunteers and anyone dealing with children at any of our Catholic facilities, institutions or agencies. The Diocesan Victim Assistance Committee, established seven years ago, continues to provide assistance in securing counseling services for people suffering from the effects of past sexual abuse. We seek to cooperate fully with law enforcement or other social service agencies whenever incidents of this nature might arise in any circumstance brought to our attention. These efforts hopefully are making the Diocese of Burlington one of today's leaders among those dedicated to creating a safe environment for our children. Accompanying this letter is an updated presentation of the ongoing services of the Office of Safe Environment Programs.

In seeking solutions to these cases now under review, competent advisors are being consulted, each with his or her own sensitivity, pastoral awareness and expertise. While regretting that legal options still must be considered, the amount awarded in this present case seriously challenges the Diocese in its ability to resolve the remaining cases and, therefore, does merit review. Thus, upon deliberation by diocesan consultative bodies, as well as respecting the sentiments thus far expressed by the faithful, it has been decided that the decision will be appealed. Again, the concerns of all affected by this tragic case must remain before our eyes. As we pursue an effective solution, diocesan resources will be analyzed with

the hope that needed ministries will continue uninterrupted and parishes remain unaffected by a burden that does not belong to them.

As more information is available, I will continue to keep you apprised of developments in this matter. I beg for your prayers as I do what is possible to address this situation. With your good prayers to supplement my human limitations, I hope resolution will result and thereby enable the Diocese to move forward in fulfilling its mission to serve God's people in love and in fidelity.

In concluding, I repeat my plea to those estranged from the Church to come home. Please recall the words of St. Paul: "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).

Thanking you for your deep faith, understanding and patience and renewing my plea for prayers, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Salvatore R. Matano*

The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
Bishop of Burlington

Timeline of Progress
Submitted by the Diocesan Office of Safe Environment (OSEP)

Chronology of the Office of Safe Environment Programs

Dating back to 1995 the initiatives of the Diocese of Burlington provided education to adults regarding safety measures to protect children and young people under the program *Walking in the Light: A Pastoral Response to Child Sexual Abuse* as produced and disseminated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Diocesan efforts to comply with the USCCB's "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" begin in 2003, under the direction of the Misconduct Review Board.

2003-2005 Research and Development Program – All volunteer staff

In May, 2005, the Office of Safe Environment is established, with Kevin P. Scully appointed program director.

Over this four-year period, the Diocese of Burlington implements programs to familiarize its members with the "Expectations and Responsibilities presented by the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*":

- Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington adopts Virtus and Child Lures Programs
- "Formation in Christian Chastity" implemented throughout the Diocese through parish religious education programs.
- Orientation and instruction for use of "Child Lures Prevention" implemented in Catholic schools. Child Lures Program Developer, Ken Wooden, conducts various training presentations in our Diocese.
- Facilitator training for parish presenters of "Protecting God's Children" underway. This acclaimed program has been developed by the National Catholic Risk Retention Services.
- Office of Safe Environment develops "Shield the Vulnerable," an online law-based program. Law Room of San Francisco, California, tailored the program to specifically address Vermont law. 1637 participants.
- Statistical Information:
 - 106 priests, 41 deacons, 304 educators, 210 diocesan employees, 3500 volunteers and others, and in excess of 300 parents.
 - Approximately 2000 people are involved in ongoing education online using the Virtus Program.
 - 1500 criminal records checks conducted of personnel working with our children. (Since implementation of the program, OSE has made over 3000 such inquiries.)

- July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007, Diocese of Burlington attains full compliance with the USCCB "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People."
- 2008 ParishSoft Safe Environment Management Program designed for the Diocese and used in the parishes to maintain current information regarding qualifications of volunteers and paid personnel to serve children in the Diocese.