



## DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

November 22, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thanksgiving – it's a time to give thanks and to reflect on God's blessings in our lives! I know for certain that I am thankful to be here with you in the Diocese of Green Bay where the Church is an integral part of daily life. This Thanksgiving marks a milestone for me because I will have completed my first 90 days as your Bishop. In business terms, it's called the first quarter. Here's what I have been doing during my first 90 days on the job.

I have traveled to nearly all of the 16 counties of the Diocese where I have been welcomed by so many of you. During my visits to places like Antigo, Florence, Oshkosh, Appleton, Hofa Park and Manitowoc, among others, I have been profoundly humbled and inspired by your kindness and deep sense of faith. Wherever I go, I have exchanged blessings with you and delighted in delicious meals usually cooked by the parishioners themselves! I have been blessed to celebrate Sunday Masses and special liturgies with you, participate in staff and clergy retreats, dedicate and bless churches and classrooms, celebrate the Sacraments including Confirmation, and simply pray with you. You are good and faithful people, and my heart is full of joy and thanksgiving!

During my visits, many of you have asked what my vision is for the Diocese of Green Bay, and I often responded with "I'm not sure yet" or "I'm still learning about the Diocese." The initiatives that I talked about when I first came here are still very important to me and will be an integral part of our diocesan planning efforts. These initiatives include vocations to the priesthood, religious life, married or single life; evangelization (sharing our faith); lifelong learning of our faith; strengthening our families; and ensuring the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults.

While I could talk about each of these initiatives in great length, I want to focus on one -- the safety of all children and vulnerable adults. I am committed to protecting our children and vulnerable adults from any kind of harm, especially abuse. Abuse is always wrong because it is contrary to the Gospel message of Jesus. As a Diocese, we have taken numerous measures to maintain safe environments in our parishes, schools and other facilities.

These measures include the following: 1.) No one with a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is allowed to serve in public ministry. 2.) Some people have asked us to release the names of alleged offenders. We do so through our mandatory reporting of all credible allegations of abuse to local civil authorities – no exceptions. This requirement respects everyone's rights and it allows civil authorities to do what they do best – investigate and prosecute. 3.) We require all employees -- including myself -- at our parishes, schools, diocesan facilities and offices and all adult volunteers who have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults to sign our Code of Conduct, undergo a background check, and participate in VIRTUS Protecting God's Children for Adults training. In the last five years, we've conducted background checks on approximately 18,000 employees and volunteers, and nearly 20,000 people have participated in VIRTUS. There is much more we have been doing and will continue to do. To learn more, visit [www.gbdioc.org](http://www.gbdioc.org), select "Protecting Our Children," and then the "Fact Sheet."

Finally, it has been an exciting time for me in the first 90 days as your Bishop. Thank you for your commitment to help make our parish communities strong and vibrant, and thank you for your faith-filled dedication to Jesus Christ and His Holy Church. Please keep me in your thoughts and prayers and I will do the same for you. May your days be filled with God's blessings.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL  
Bishop of Green Bay