

May 13, 2010  
Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

On several occasions I have communicated with you about our diocesan efforts to address in a just and charitable manner the very sad incidences of clergy sexual abuse dating back in most instances to more than three decades ago. This has been a very painful process for the victims and for all the members of our diocesan family. I once again apologize most sincerely for the pain the victims have suffered. I ask that you join me in praying always for these wounded and hurt brothers and sisters. It is my constant hope that one day we will be united in the faith.

Undoubtedly you are aware that the Diocese has been embroiled in litigation for several years, during which time there have been six trials with varied results. Three juries have awarded verdicts of nearly \$15,000,000, which were appealed. After years of trials, the Diocese still faced more than two dozen cases. Throughout this entire process a just and charitable resolution was being sought, several settlements were agreed upon, and now the remaining cases have been brought to a conclusion.

Thus, I write to inform you that all of the pending lawsuits against the Diocese have been settled. A total of twenty-six (26) cases were settled for \$17,650,000. The Diocese also settled the three cases that were on appeal before the Vermont Supreme Court. The terms of those settlements were much more modest than the jury awards, but, at the request of the plaintiffs, the precise amounts are confidential.

The cost of the settlements is the sole responsibility of the Diocese. No funds from parishes, institutions, charitable agencies of the Diocese or the Bishop's Fund have been used for past settlements, and none are being used to meet the financial obligations resulting from these present settlements. The intentions of our donors have been and continue to be both respected and upheld.

In view of the above, our diocesan administration building, located at 351 North Avenue, Burlington, and the former Camp Tara-Holy Cross property, located in Colchester, have been placed on the real estate market. The Diocese has secured an interim loan using our diocesan property as collateral. Also, our unrestricted diocesan reserves have been depleted to satisfy the financial costs of these settlements. These decisions have been reached after extensive consultations with and the support of the Diocesan Administrative Board, the Diocesan College of Consultors, the Diocesan

Presbyteral Council, the Diocesan Finance Council and the Diocesan Officers in accordance with the *Code of Canon Law*.

Since the central administration property is for sale, a suitable and reasonable relocation is being sought with several possibilities under consideration. As these relocation plans are finalized, notification will be given to parishes and other diocesan institutions and the general public. In addition, over the last several years diocesan staff has been reduced significantly. Yet, all diocesan ministries and services have continued through the very cooperative and dedicated spirit of our diocesan staff, mirrored throughout our parishes and institutions.

Under the leadership of our Office of Safe Environment Programs, our Diocese is recognized as a leader because of its efforts to do everything possible to create safe environments for our children and young people. On-going programs for clergy, religious, laity, both employees and volunteers, are in place to educate the faithful about child sexual abuse and to know how to respond to any situation which might place our children at risk and cause harm to them.

In concluding, I express my profound gratitude for your deep faith and devotion to Our Lord, forever present to us in the Most Holy Eucharist. I also beg His forgiveness for any insensitivity or lack of charity which I may have shown throughout this process. I continue to ask for your prayers as I fulfill my duties as the Bishop of Burlington.

Renewing my commitment to serve you with a Shepherd's heart, I remain

Devotedly yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano  
Bishop of Burlington