



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DIOCESE OF JOLIET URGES VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE TO SEEK JUSTICE; PLEDGES HELP**

The Diocese of Joliet urges anyone who may have been sexually abused as a minor by a member of the clergy, employee or volunteer of the diocese to report the abuse to civil authorities and to us. The diocese is stepping up its efforts to further healing and justice for those who may have been abused.

As has been widely reported, a settlement has recently been reached between the diocese and a survivor of clergy sexual abuse. As part of the settlement, the diocese has updated its website listing priest-offenders and has agreed that certain priest files may be made public. Allegations against priests on the list were previously reported to civil authorities and widely reported in the media. All have been removed from ministry. The diocese recognizes that the release of this information may prompt people who were abused in the past to speak of it now for the first time.

“Sexual abuse is a sin and a crime and should be reported to civil authorities even if the alleged abuse occurred many years ago,” says Molly Fara, director of the Office of Child and Youth Protection at the Diocese of Joliet. “The Church has a responsibility to help victims of sexual abuse and to ensure that offenders are brought to justice. That is why we are also posting on the main page of our website a message urging anyone who may have been abused by a member of the clergy, employee or volunteer of the diocese to come forward. We promise pastoral assistance and continued cooperation with civil authorities”

Reports may be made to any pastor or by contacting the diocese’s Victim Assistance Coordinator at (815) 263-6467.

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Reminding victims to report abuse is in accord with the diocese's plan to step up its child protection effort as part of Child Abuse Prevention Month in April, which has been designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The diocese also announced a day of prayer and fasting on Friday, April 26, for all who have been victimized by abuse as part of a commemoration of Child Abuse Prevention Month. The diocese asks everyone to acknowledge those who have been affected by child abuse and to pray for the protection of our children.

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