



DIOCESE OF PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE

OFFICE OF BISHOP

Sunday, July 9, 2006.

Dear Parishioners of Blessed Trinity,

As you may be aware, the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee was informed on June 26 that an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor was made against Father Vijaya Bhaskar, who is a priest of the Diocese of Cuddapah in India. Father Bhaskar had been assisting at Blessed Trinity from June 3 until June 26. Prior to his arrival in the diocese, reference checks performed on Father Bhaskar revealed no indication of improper behavior.

Upon receiving this information and in full compliance with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, I informed Father Bhaskar that he was prohibited from exercising any ministry in this diocese. The Diocese confirmed that the matter was reported to the Holmes County Sheriff's Department and reported the matter to the Florida Department of Children and Families Abuse Registry. As the matter continues to be investigated, the Diocese pledges full cooperation with the investigative agencies. Father Bhaskar has been in residence at St. Margaret of Scotland Parish rectory under the direct supervision of the pastor, Father Richard Dawson, since June 26.

Anytime an accusation of sexual misconduct is made, it saddens the members of the Catholic community, for this is a most serious sin and offense, contrary to Catholic morality and an abuse of trust.

The Diocese extends its pastoral concern for any victims of crime perpetrated by church personnel and for any harm they may have experienced, and remains committed to protecting the safety and well-being of all who seek ministry and pastoral care from representatives of the Church.

The Diocese urges anyone with information related to this investigation to contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator, Danielle Malone, at 850-438-3131, ext. 17, or the Holmes County Sheriff's Department at 850-547-3681, or the Florida Department of Children and Family Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873.)

We offer our fervent prayers for the healing of all concerned.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev./John H. Ricard, SSJ
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee