

BACKGROUND

From 1898 until 1987, St. Anthony's Seminary of Santa Barbara, California, was a minor seminary operated by the Province of St. Barbara of the Order of Friars Minor of the Roman Catholic Church. It operated as a boarding school for male high school students who aspired to become Franciscan priests or brothers. While the numbers varied over the years, an average of 5 to 10 percent of the graduates pursued their vocation into membership in the Order. The school was closed in 1987 for financial reasons.

In 1989 a former St. Anthony's student reported that over a two-year period, he was sexually molested by a St. Anthony's friar on numerous occasions, sometimes in the student's own home. The younger brother of the first student then reported in May 1992 that a second St. Anthony's friar, the founder and director of the Santa Barbara Boys' Choir, had sexually molested him on numerous occasions.

In October 1992, while the Province and Boys' Choir were considering the best pastoral response, and after there had been a period of significant effort and urging by members of the St. Anthony's Seminary Greater Community (a group much like members of a parish), the Santa Barbara Boys' Choir and the Provincial Minister jointly sent a letter to parents of choir members to determine if other boys had been molested, and subsequently held a community meeting for parents of seminary students and choir members. At this meeting, two additional families reported that their sons had also been sexually molested by the second friar.

In November 1992 the Provincial Minister stated that a plan for an investigation to look into the allegations would be presented in December. In the interim, 25-30 members of the Greater Community developed a set of recommendations that they felt would be necessary for a thorough and independent investigation. (See Appendix, *Commission Requirements*.)

In December 1992, the Province of St. Barbara committed itself to establishing an independent board of inquiry to investigate the reports of abuse. (See Appendix, *A Comprehensive Approach to Provincial Policy and a Pastoral Response to Instances of Sexual Abuse of Minors at St. Anthony's Seminary*.) The Independent Board of Inquiry was convened in January 1993. The Board consisted of six members who were chosen jointly by the Greater Community and the Province of St. Barbara. (See Appendix, *Members of Independent Board of Inquiry*.) Its mandate was to assess the nature and extent of sexual abuse at St. Anthony's Seminary for the period from 1964 (the beginning of the tenure of a third alleged offending friar) until the closure of the seminary in 1987.