

On January 18, 2001, I issued "The State of the Diocese 2001" on the occasion of my fifth anniversary as Bishop of the Diocese of Wilmington. In this report to the people of the Diocese, I gave a progress report on the seven major priorities for the Diocese of Wilmington which were established with extensive consultation when I came to Wilmington in 1996-1997. Those seven priorities include:

- 1) Conduct an aggressive campaign throughout the Diocese to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life.
- 2) Develop and implement a comprehensive pastoral plan for ministry to Hispanic people.
- 3) Assess Diocesan offices and ministries to assure efficiency and effectiveness.
- 4) Establish new parishes and schools.
- 5) Explore models of parish ministry, closely examining the role of the clergy and the laity in these models.
- 6) Evangelize the unchurched and alienated African American community.
- 7) Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for ministry on college campuses.

On August 30, 2001, I issued "Holiness in the World of Work" which appeared in both our diocesan newspaper and *Origins* (Catholic News Service). This pastoral letter stresses that "Work is most powerfully and most essentially an apostolate of the lay faithful." Justin M. Carisio, Jr., the Manager of Executive Communications for the DuPont Company and a theologically astute Third Order Franciscan, assisted me along with the lay people of the Diocesan Pastoral Council with this very readable and practical contribution.

On January 24, 2002, I issued "Catholic Schools: A Gift of the Church". This pastoral letter explores the history, contribution and vibrant future of Catholic education in the Diocese of Wilmington and the United States.

Finally, On September 5, 2002, I issued "The Spiritual Lessons of September 11". This pastoral letter commemorated the one year anniversary of 9/11 and reflected on the experience of 9/11 in the inspiring light of Roman Catholic theology and spirituality. Enclosed are copies of the pastoral statements.

I take the Bishop's duty to teach, to shepherd, to sanctify seriously. I continue as did my predecessors to use *The Dialog*, the diocesan paper, with circulation into every Catholic home to teach personally or see to it that articles in conformity with Catholic teaching are printed.

1a. The Crisis in the Church and the Diocese of Wilmington

I would first like to thank the Holy Father and the members of the Roman Curia who provided such encouragement, counsel and guidance during the difficult times of the crisis.

Generally, the Diocese of Wilmington has navigated well through the crisis. It was my intention from the outset to act prudently, to follow the 1983 Code of Canon Law (and later the Essential Norms) and to protect the rights of victims, accused priests as well as the general public ecclesial good.

We have established a very positive and trusting relationship with the Attorney General of the State of Delaware as well as the various State's Attorneys who have jurisdiction on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

We had publicly announced that 15 priests [many of whom were deceased] from the past 50 years had been guilty of sexual abuse. We did not announce the names of the clergy.

In the summer of 2002, we formed a Diocesan Review Board which included prestigious judges, doctors, a sexual abuse specialist, a human resources specialist and a communications professional. In January of 2003, the Diocesan Review Board found that there was credible evidence that an additional three priests had committed the sexual abuse of a minor. As Bishop I have accepted the Review Board's conclusions.

Two of the priests resigned. One priest was relieved from his duties. We are at this time currently processing the necessary documentation with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Msgr. Scicluna's seminar at the Pope John Paul II Center in Washington, DC August 11-12, 2003 was helpful to our Chancellor and canonical consultant. We are carefully following civil and criminal law developments such as the recent ruling of the United States Supreme Court in regard to statute of limitations.

Another priest who had been working in an office of the USCCB in Washington, DC left active ministry in the diocese after credible allegations of sexual abuse of a minor committed when he was a lay teacher in the Archdiocese of Baltimore in the 1970s surfaced. With consultation from the Promoter of Justice for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Diocese of Wilmington is in the process of taking further steps in this delicate situation.

We have proactively implemented the guidelines from the Charter which include policies and procedures that provide safe environments for Church youth ministry activities as well as criminal background checks for clergy and diocesan and parish employees who work closely with youth.

In an audit conducted October 13, 2003—October 17, 2003, The Gavin Group, Inc. (representing the National Review Board) stated in its October 22, 2003 report to me: "This audit finds the Diocese of Wilmington to be in compliance with the

Charter...The diocese was commended for its safe environment program." No recommendations for improvement were made. Here are some highlights of the report:

*"The diocesan policy provides protocols for receiving reports of incidents and notifying civil authorities. The diocese has published its policy on its internet site and in the diocesan newspaper, and has furnished hard copies to all priests and school officials. Procedures for reporting incidents are clearly laid out and easy to follow. The Bishop or his representative has met with all victims or families who have been willing to accept them."

*"The Bishop has met with the Delaware Attorney General (AG) and the diocesan attorney has contacted most of the Maryland State's Attorneys. A protocol was agreed to for reporting all allegations. In the meeting with the AG, the bishop disclosed all information requested on all known cases for the past 40 years. An editorial in the *News Journal*, dated January 29, 2003, praised the diocese for its swift and open handling of the three abuse cases. Wilmington's policy provided for a prompt and thorough investigation in accord with canon law and due process."

*"A written communications policy exists which incorporates concern for law enforcement, parishes, public, and sex abuse prevention, and outreach programs. The diocese has demonstrated a very open and transparent relationship with the media."

*"In July 2002, a committee of 14 was established to implement all aspects of the background check system including a 5 year cyclical review. As of September 2003, over 6,000 individuals have undergone background checks. They anticipate an additional 4,000 will have checks completed by the end of the year. A stringent screening and evaluation process is used for prospective seminarians prior to acceptance using an 11 point program."

*"In January 2003 a blue ribbon task force drafted priestly standards regarding celibacy and sexuality. The Bishop maintains a consistent focus on health, balanced priestly celibacy, sexuality and ministerial ethics."

Please see the enclosed October 22, 2003 communication from The Gavin Group, Inc. for more detail.

1b. Diocesan Summits and Sonrise 2000

In addition to the pastoral statements, diocesan summits on vocation awareness, lay ministry and collaborative ministry have had a lasting impact on the direction of the diocese. Our diocesan summit on vocation awareness helped us realize that everyone is responsible for cultivating vocations to the priesthood