

Sts. Philip and James Catholic Church

606 Fulton Street, PO Box 287
Grand Mound, IA 52751-0287
(563) 847-2271

January 19, 2004

Most Reverend William E. Franklin
Diocese of Davenport
St. Vincent Center
2706 North Gaines Street
Davenport, IA 52804-1998

Dear Bishop Franklin:

As stated in I Corinthians 13:24-26, "But God has constructed the body...so that there be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share the joy." A respected member of our parish has identified himself as a victim of inappropriate sexual behavior by a priest while ministering our parish, and S.S. Philip & James parishioners have been directly affected by these allegations facing the Diocese of Davenport.

As members of Christ's body, we are writing this letter in hopes that you may fully understand the impact this situation has on our parish. We can no longer maintain our silence, as silence constitutes consent to sexual abuse of our children. We use the words of our Holy Father; that sexual abuse of young people is "by every standard wrong and rightly considered a crime by society; it is also an appalling sin in the eyes of God". *(Address to the Cardinals of the United States & Conference Officers - April 23, 2003.)*

It saddens us to report that we have not been provided the information or services from the Diocese of Davenport that you have identified as "key" in healing the pain that we are experiencing as a parish. As parishioners of S.S. Philip & James, we would like to see the following actions taken to start the healing process for our parish.

We would like to see the *Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Davenport Diocese (Adopted 1998, Revised June 2003)* implemented as outlined in the *"Communication Policy & Response To Those Impacted By The Pain of Sexual Misconduct - Pages 29 - 32.*

- The Diocese of Davenport "acknowledges that one of the most important elements in healing is that the parish receives information about what happened." It helps dispel that a cover-up is being imposed. It also acknowledges the complex process of grieving. It continues, "Information also assists other victims to come forward, if there are any, and assures that the appropriate steps are taken so that the Church can truly move ahead."

The first and more pressing reason is so persons who may have been victims of misconduct in those other settings will know that they may come forward for assistance. The second is to encourage healing of the hurt and betrayal that can result from knowledge of the accusations.

- Conducting parish/staff meetings, -- as a meeting is a key step in the process of healing. It allows for a more complete discussion of the complaint, its investigation and its implications for the entity.
- Key personnel will be informed of the accusation, the follow-up steps that are planned, and the potential impact of the news on their own parish or other entity.
- The pastor or administrator, after consulting with Diocesan officials and the parish leadership, will announce the accusation against their former minister. The announcement of disclosure also indicates that some process for immediate follow-up has been put in place. This is generally a meeting of the parish or other group impacted, but other options may be used.
- Key personnel will form a team to assess the ongoing impact of the disclosure in the parish/entity. The team should meet at least once with the Bishop or his designee about three to six weeks after the disclosure. More meetings can be scheduled if needed.

We have painfully opened our eyes to the reality that steps outlined in the Sexual Misconduct Policy were not followed. At no time did diocesan officials contact us as parish council members. At no time were we offered a parish meeting with diocesan officials or otherwise for a more complete discussion of the complaint. And, at no time were any follow up procedures established to assess the ongoing impact of the disclosures in our parish.

We reference the *"Charter for the Protection of Children & Young People & Essential Norms"* which was approved by the United States Bishops in Dallas on June 2002. This Charter committed each Diocese in the United States to implement a communication policy that reflected a commitment to "openness and transparency" that would become the norm in dealing with sexual abuse issues within the American Catholic Church. We believe that

these are virtues that must encompass the entire catholic structure from top to bottom. This Charter that the Church itself orders must be one whose principal characteristic is gospel integrity. We must not cover up inappropriate actions of some priests; thereby, placing a veil of suspicion over innocent priests who are good and holy people that work hard to accomplish the mission of the gospel. A cover up would create a sense of concern for the children of our diocese today.

Bishop Franklin, please help us to create a positive change for our diocese and our church at large. We love our church and our faith is the foundation of our lives, -- we pray for our Church to continue to thrive and grow.

By being forthcoming with information regarding the accusations of sexual abuse (s) within our diocese, you have the chance of a lifetime to break down barriers and build a bridge of reconciliation, healing, and compassion between the hierarchy and the laity of the Catholic Church. You can help end the division in this body and heal the suffering. Only then can we, as one body in Christ, share in the joy of creating a church, which honors God with faith, justice, truth, and love.

Bishop Franklin, we look forward to hearing from you and would appreciate your reply by February 2, 2004.

Respectfully yours,

S.S. Philip & James Parish Council

Dee Dee Banowitz
DeeDee Banowitz

Lisa Fox
Lisa Fox

Mary Ann Hahn
Mary Ann Hahn

Neil A. Mason
Neil Mason

Deb Olson
Deb Olson

Diana Scott
Diana Scott

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