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Dear Mary Jane:

I wish to thank you once again for your work, and that of the Implementation and Oversight Advisory Committee and the Review Board of the Archdiocese, in preparing *Children First*, a two-year assessment of the Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Children in the Archdiocese of Boston. Although there have been informal responses to that report by both myself and my Special Assistant, Fr. John Connolly, please consider this my formal response to your very comprehensive and insightful report.

At the outset, let me say again that I am extremely grateful for the diligent work of your Committee and that of the Review Board in preparing this Report. *Children First* provided the Archdiocese with a clear understanding of what has been accomplished already, as well as guidance on how to strengthen our policies and practices going forward. I am deeply indebted to you, and all those who participated in this effort, for stepping forward to assist us as we work to confront these serious issues. The findings and recommendations set forth in *Children First* have helped the Archdiocese to explore new ways to improve upon our ongoing efforts to provide safe environments for children and to support survivors and all people who have suffered as a result of clergy sexual abuse.

From the earliest days of the abuse crisis, we have understood the need to continuously evaluate and enhance our policies and practices for the protection of children. As the very title of your report suggests, the Church must bear constantly in mind the paramount importance of assuring the protection of children. While much has been accomplished to date through your work, and that of many other good and devoted people, it would be a mistake to think that the Church in Boston is completely beyond this crisis. We must be ever vigilant for the protection of children in order to restore the confidence of the faithful in the Church and its institutions.

*Children First* contained a number of recommendations for change in policy or in practice intended to strengthen and enhance the Archdiocese's child protection and

survivor outreach efforts. Since the report was first received, many of the recommendations have already been adopted and others are in the process of being implemented. By this letter, I would like to formally respond to the recommendations and provide you the status of Archdiocesan implementation, dividing your specific recommendations into three general areas of concern.

### **1. Pastoral Outreach and Healing**

In his visit last spring to the United States, Pope Benedict addressed on several occasions the importance of outreach and assistance to the survivors of clergy abuse. Perhaps most pertinent was his direction to the assembled Bishops in Washington on April 16, 2008: "It is your God-given responsibility as pastors to bind up the wounds caused by every breach of trust, to foster healing, to promote reconciliation and to reach out with loving concern to those so seriously wronged."

The Holy Father's directive could not have been clearer, and it is consistent with the recommendations in your report. The Archdiocese has been working to extend pastoral support and outreach across the Archdiocese. Our work in this area has been coordinated through the Office of Pastoral Support and Outreach (OPSO), which provides both counseling and other forms of assistance to survivors of clergy sexual abuse and their families. In the past year alone, over 300 survivors have received counseling assistance through that office.

Your report speaks to the need for a broader pastoral effort, and indeed that has been underway for some time now. This pastoral work is multi-faceted and has included, among other efforts, the following:

- In the spring of 2006, I invited both clergy and laity to join me in a "Pilgrimage of Repentance and Hope." Prayer services and Masses were conducted in nine communities that have experienced an especially painful history of sexual abuse of children by priests of the Archdiocese.
- From December 2006 through April 2007, OPSO developed a monthly Mass program specifically for survivors and their family members.
- In November 2007, the Office of Pastoral Support and Outreach coordinated a "Mass of Remembrance." Celebrated by Bishop Doohar, this Mass honored the lives of survivors who have passed away and brought together dozens of families.
- Perhaps most significant was the meeting this past April between the Holy Father and five survivors of clergy sexual abuse from Boston. I was present for that meeting, along with my Special Assistant, Fr. John Connolly, and Barbara Thorp, Director of OPSO. It was truly a moving and historic meeting, during which the Holy Father was able to express directly his pastoral care and concern not only for the five Boston survivors who were present, but for all those impacted by clergy sexual abuse.

In addition to these pastoral efforts, we continue to move forward to resolve the claims of clergy sexual abuse that remain pending against the Archdiocese. In settling

these claims, the Archdiocese has sought to be both just and sensitive to survivors' pastoral needs. More than 750 settlements have been reached since I have become Archbishop of Boston. The Archdiocese continues to make steady progress in resolving these pending claims, which in most cases are settled using an arbitration process designed to facilitate compensation without re-victimization. We do, as you recommend, make every effort to balance the legal response with pastoral needs.

## **2. Safe Environment Programs**

*Children First* calls for sustaining, strengthening and extending safe environment programs across the Archdiocese until they have become assimilated and routine. The Archdiocese has devoted substantial resources to addressing that recommendation. These efforts have been coordinated through the Office of Child Advocacy, Implementation and Oversight, under the direction of Deacon Tony Rizzuto, and with the guidance and contributions of the members of the IOAC. Among other efforts which have been undertaken, the following are noteworthy:

- The Offices of Child Advocacy and Religious Education have engaged in a sustained and intense campaign of outreach – parish by parish – to ensure safe environment training is conducted. To assist in this effort, the Office of Child Advocacy retained the services of Kathy Kelley, a full-time Child Abuse Prevention Specialist.
- The result of these efforts is that there has been excellent compliance in regards to training programs for staff, parents and volunteers, as well as those children attending our parochial schools. However, as you know, there has been resistance experienced in certain parishes regarding safe environment training for children during religious education, due to a variety of factors. I very much appreciate the work of your Committee in developing two additional programs to offer alternatives to the original safe environment program. I think those new alternatives will address the concerns that have been expressed by certain pastors, teachers, and parents in the area of safe environment training during religious education.
- To create greater linkage between the Archdiocese and parish CAP teams, the Archdiocese convened a Planning Committee made up of CAP team representatives from each region to help plan a series of five regional CAP team meetings in order to share best practices and create opportunities for inter-parish collaboration on training efforts.
- To ensure compliance with our safe environment programs, the Archdiocese has participated, over the last three years, in extensive audits at the parish level. These annual audits have been conducted by the same outside auditors retained by the United States Catholic Conference to perform diocesan audits. Those audits, published on the Archdiocesan web site, have shown steady progress across the Archdiocese in our child protection efforts.
- Based on the results of the 2008 full audit, the Archdiocese was found to be in compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and*

*Young People.* The parish-level audit, which was conducted again in 2008, demonstrated substantial progress in addressing the area previously identified as a deficiency – safe environment training for children in religious education programs.

Sustaining and strengthening our safe environment programs will remain a top priority for the Archdiocese. As the Holy Father told us in April, “It is vitally important that the vulnerable always be shielded from those who would cause harm.” Again, I greatly value the work that has been done by your Committee and the Office of Child Advocacy to strengthen and extend our safe environment programs.

### **3. Changes in Systems and Practices**

A number of the recommendations in *Children First* are addressed to the process by which allegations of sexual abuse against Boston priests are investigated and presented to the Review Board. Several steps have been taken to address these recommendations.

Over the last two years, the Archdiocese has returned to the system of a single Delegate for Investigations (as opposed to a system of co-Delegates, one with training in canon law). At the present time, the Delegate for Investigations is a layperson, with over thirty years of police investigative experience. We have established and maintained good working relationships with the Cardinal’s Assistant for Canonical Affairs, the Judicial Vicar, and the Promoter of Justice, and will call upon those offices when canon law guidance is required.

We have not yet formally adopted but are working to effectuate changes with respect to the Review Board itself. Among other changes that are under consideration are the inclusion of non-Catholic membership on the Review Board. We also anticipate revisions of the Policies and Procedures addressing the recommendations in your report. I agree with the specific recommendations that due process be observed for complainants and accused with regard to both the handling of preliminary investigations and the speed with which investigations are conducted.

A number of the recommendations in *Children First* relate to other suggested changes in systems and practices. Many of these have been adopted already and I note, in particular, the following:

- The *Children First* report recommends centralizing the authority of the Special Assistant over all offices, programs and efforts directed at abuse prevention. As you know, for several years now I have centralized our abuse related programs under my Special Assistant, Fr. John Connolly. He reports directly to me and has oversight of all of the different offices within the Archdiocese directed at child abuse prevention and response. In particular, he supervises the Office of the Delegate for Investigations, the Office of Child Advocacy, the Office of Pastoral Support and Outreach, and the Office for Background Screening.
- *Children First* recommends that a mechanism for tracking mandated reporting under Section 51A be created in order to measure compliance

and policy effectiveness. Copies of all mandated reports by any school or other Archdiocesan institution now are directed to my Special Assistant for compilation by the Office of Child Advocacy. This new protocol has been quite helpful in collecting information on reporting, and has demonstrated both the effectiveness of our training programs and the strong compliance that exists in the Archdiocese. In fact, the data demonstrates that children are using the skills learned to come forward and report abusive situations and get the help they need. Almost 500 reports of child abuse or neglect (51A reports) have been filed with DCF by our parishes and schools since the safety programs began. The majority of the reports were made as a result of a child self-disclosing the abuse to someone in the parish. In almost all cases, the abuse involved someone in the child's family, a neighbor, other children, or an adult known to the child.

- *Children First* recommends developing a continuous quality improvement (CQI) policy review process. That in fact has been implemented, starting in October 2006. So far, there have been five CQI reports prepared and posted on the Archdiocesan website.
- Your Committee's report recommends that the Archdiocese develop and carry out an evaluation to measure the efficacy of the multi-faceted programs for the protection of children implemented by the Archdiocese. That in fact has occurred, with help and participation by your Committee, culminating in the publication last spring of a report entitled "A Methodology for Assessing the Effectiveness of RCAB Programs for Child Protection and Abuse Prevention."

We have under consideration, but have not yet formally implemented, other structural changes. Most prominent is a proposed change to combine the work of the present IOAC and Review Board into a single newly constituted Review Board, which will advise me on both how to address particular complaints and on policy matters. This is the model recommended by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and memorialized in the *Essential Norms*. Now that strong child abuse prevention programs have been developed and established in the Archdiocese, and we move beyond the atmosphere of crisis to one of implementation and vigilance, I think that combining all advisory functions into a single Board will better serve the needs of the Archdiocese.

Your report makes reference to the area of transparency and openness. The Archdiocese has made a commitment to greater transparency, as witnessed in our annual financial reports, including reports on abuse settlements and related costs. We also have presently under consideration augmenting present Archdiocesan policy in the area of disclosing information about accused clergy and the status of cases against them. This is a complex issue. However, my expectation is that in the very near future we will be in a position to report a revision of present Archdiocesan policy on this subject which will address some of the remaining recommendations included in your report.

I wish again to thank you and all those from the IOAC and the Review Board who so ably assisted with the preparation of *Children First*. I truly believe that, as a result of

the work of the IOAC and Review Board, as well as the other offices and agencies of the Archdiocese directed to child abuse prevention, there is no safer place for a child today than in the Archdiocese of Boston. I am also hopeful that our painful history, and the knowledge and experience we have derived from it, will be of assistance to our wider society in addressing the continuing problem of the sexual exploitation of children.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

  
Archbishop of Boston