

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

222 North Seventeenth Street • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-1299
Telephone (215) 587-3800 • Fax (215) 587-3806

OFFICE of the CARDINAL

September 21, 2005

Dear People of the Archdiocese,

Since April of 2002, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has been the subject of a grand jury investigation conducted by the District Attorney of the City of Philadelphia. This investigation was to include "other religious orders, organizations and denominations." This week, it was announced that the grand jury had completed its work and has issued its report. The publication of this lengthy report is receiving extensive coverage in the secular media. As the Archbishop of Philadelphia, I desire to communicate with you at this critical moment concerning the report.

The report is very painful to read. The pain and suffering experienced by those who have been abused by clergy is great, and we must continually pray for healing for the victims. In addition, we must also pray for the members of the clergy who have perpetrated the abuse. The report is unjustifiably critical of Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, Cardinal John Krol and others who worked in the administration of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. We must work through this difficult time in prayer and in solidarity with one another with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Once again, I acknowledge the considerable suffering experienced by victims of abuse and offer my sincere apologies. Words alone can never bring about healing, and so we continue to offer assistance to anyone who has been abused by a priest or an employee of the Church.

Without question, the report details a number of extremely painful instances of known sexual abuse of minors by clergy. The Archdiocese was permitted to respond to the Grand Jury report and the full text of this response is posted on the Archdiocesan Web Site (= "<http://www.archdiocese-phl.org>").
MACROBUTTONHtmlResAnchorwww.archdiocese-phl.org. Having said that, it is important to note the following:

A In every single case of abuse reported to Archdiocesan officials, action was taken based on the best medical information available at that time.

A Our reporting policies have changed considerably since 2002. We now report every single credible abuse charge to law enforcement.

A The number of Archdiocesan priests credibly accused is actually lower than what the report states since the report includes priests who are supervised by either religious orders or another Diocese or Archdiocese, not the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, as well as priests who were deceased at the time of the allegation.

A In 2002, Cardinal Bevilacqua stated that the Archdiocese knew of approximately thirty-five (35) priests who had been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors in the preceding fifty (50) years. Since 2002, additional victims have come forward and, as a result allegations which were not known to the Archdiocese in 2002, have been reported to the civil authorities and investigated under the oversight of the Archdiocesan Review Board. I can now state that 54 priests of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia have been credibly accused in the last fifty years.

A The Archdiocese of Philadelphia cooperated fully with the grand jury and produced in excess of 45,000 documents and supplemented the original documents 30 times with additional material.

A The Archdiocese has conducted safe environment training for almost 40,000 adults. The training is for those involved in Archdiocesan ministry and service to young people and is ongoing.

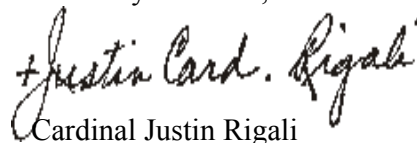
A The Archdiocese has also instituted safe environment training for young people. Almost 110,000 young people received grade-appropriate lessons concerning personal boundaries and healthy relationships.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia remains steadfastly committed to creating a safe environment for all children in our care. The important work of bringing healing to the victims of sexual abuse by clergy continues. I encourage anyone in need of such assistance to call the Victim Assistance Coordinators of the Archdiocese at: 215-587-3880.

All Catholics share in the pain and sorrow that the scandals related to sexual abuse of minors by the clergy have brought upon our Church. At this time, I am more grateful than ever for our priests who have faithfully served the Church. These dedicated men may feel tainted by the renewed attention that is being paid to tragic failures of a small minority of their brothers in the Priesthood. The failure of this minority must not be allowed to overshadow the commitment of the majority to priestly service. During this difficult time, I ask all the people of the Church to pray for their priests and for all who serve in the ministry of the Church. Pray that they will remain committed to their own growth in holiness so that they may serve God's people with renewed fervor and dedication in integrity of life. Pray also that more young men will respond to God's call and pursue a vocation to the Priesthood.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh and dwells among us, calls us to trust ever more fully in His enduring love. His light shines in the darkness. No darkness can overcome the power of the light of Jesus Christ. May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and your loved ones, and may Mary our Mother intercede for you always.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Card. Rigali". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Cardinal Justin Rigali
Archbishop of Philadelphia