

# Survey finds new 2005 claims of abuse by clergy; none in Reno

BY MARTHA BELLISLE  
mbellisle@rgj.com

While a survey found there were 783 new credible claims of sexual abuse by clergy against minors in 2005, the Diocese of Reno received no new allegations during that period, its spokesman said Thursday.

Nationwide, dioceses and religious institutions paid almost \$400 million in settlements for claims in 2005, according to a survey released Thursday by Roman Catholic officials. In Reno, the diocese paid \$35,150 in settlements last year, said Brother Matthew Cunningham, church spokesman.

In addition to legal settlements, the diocese paid \$8,000 in 2005 for therapy for victims, Cunningham said.

The highest percentage of payments gone to programs directed toward child safety, he said. Last year, the diocese spent \$52,920 for child safety, background checks and fingerprinting for volunteers and workers, as well as child education, among other programs, he said.

"The bigger thing for us is to make sure our parishes provide the numbers for victims advocates," Cunningham said. "We are continuing to do training for adults and are trying to make sure these things get out to parishes, to remind people that if there's a problem, here's what you do."

The latest nationwide figures were released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Office of Child and Youth Protection. The figures came from its third annual audit of dioceses across the country to determine how they have complied with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The charter was developed in 2002 after allegations of sexual abuse of children by priests, deacons and bishops soared. It mandated that all dioceses create safe

environments for children and established guidelines for dealing with abuse claims.

The national total for new allegations was down from the 1,092 claims reported in 2004, the study found. Nine of the 783 new claims involved abuse against children that occurred in 2005, the report said, while the remaining 774 new allegations were for abuse that occurred or began between 1960 and 1979.

While no new claims were made to the diocese against priests in 2005, the region was shaken last year with allegations against Reno priests that allegedly took place in area churches in the 1960s and 1970s.

Although the claims were made public last fall through articles in the Reno Gazette-Journal, the diocese had received those claims before last year, Cunningham said, and were not included in last year's totals.

"The first knowledge of the claims came prior to the beginning of January 2005," he said.

Interviews with six people who grew up in Reno and Carson City in religious families revealed allegations of abuse by three different priests in the diocese: David Brusky, Eugene Braun and the late Harold Vieages.

Sexual misconduct accusations also were made against the late Monsignor Robert Bowling, who was a pastor at St. Therese the Little Flower Church in Reno for 30 years. Bowling was named in 11 lawsuits primarily by women who claimed they were abused while he worked in the Archdiocese of Louisville, Ky.

The Louisville diocese settled more than 200 cases in 2004, including Bowling's suits, and agreed to pay victims \$25.7 million.

*The Associated Press contributed to this story.*