

Diocesan Safe Environment Program complies with USCCB Charter



by Sr. Candace Fier, ISSM
Safe Environment Coordinator

Once again the Safe Environment Program for the Diocese of New Ulm has good news to share following the completion of the annual audit. The Gavin Group, Inc. has deemed that the diocese is in compliance with the requirements set by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

In June of 2002 the USCCB approved the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which expresses the Church's commitment to deal appropriately and effectively with cases of sexual abuse of minors by priests, deacons, employees, and volunteers. The development of the diocesan Safe Environment Program flows from the *Charter* and gives witness to our ongoing commitment to promote and protect the life and dignity of our children and youth.

Upcoming Safe Environment (VIRTUS) training sessions:
Oct. 5, 6:30 p.m. in Ortonville;

Audit Year (July 2009 – June 2010)

8,439 Children and youth trained through our schools and religious education classes

712 Pastoral leaders, employees, and volunteers trained in 42 VIRTUS sessions around the diocese.

838 Background checks done on employees, volunteers, and speakers coming into diocese:

- 152 employee checks
- 619 volunteer checks
- 67 motor vehicle checks

Oct. 16, 9:30 a.m. in Wabasso; Oct. 25, 6:30 p.m. in Fairfax; Oct. 28 at 7 p.m. in Minnetonka; and Oct. 30 at 9 a.m. in Manannah. To register online visit www.dnu.org or call (507) 359-2966.

The compliance of our diocesan program is a confirmation and positive indication of the successful efforts of our entire diocese to keep our children safe and to promote the healing and reconciliation of all those affected by sexual abuse.

As we celebrate what has been accomplished here in the diocese we also look forward to our new school year and our ongoing program efforts. In October and January the pastoral leaders, local safe environment coordinators, school principals, directors of religious education, teachers, and catechists will once again collaborate to train our children and youth in a faith environment that promotes their life and dignity as part of a Church that is a holy family of God.

If you or someone you know has been sexually exploited by a member of the clergy and you need to talk with someone about abuse, exploitation, or harassment, please contact the Diocese of New Ulm Victim Assistance Coordinator or the Bishop's Delegate in Matters Pertaining to Sexual Misconduct by Clergy, 1400 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; phone: (507) 359-2966.

Si usted, o alguien a quien conoce, ha sido sexualmente por un clero y necesita hablar con alguien sobre abuso, o acoso sexual, por favor ponerse en contacto con el Coordinador de Asistencia para Víctimas de la Diócesis de New Ulm o con el Delegado del Obispo en Asuntos que Pertenecen al Abuso Sexual por Cleros de la Diócesis de New Ulm, 1400 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; número de teléfono (507) 359-2966.

Benedict XVI and meeting with victim/survivors of sexual abuse

by Sr. Mary Ann Walsh

Reports on Pope Benedict's September 16-19 visit to England and Scotland where he met with victims of sexual abuse by clerics recalls the similar meeting that took place in Washington when the pope visited the United States in 2008. Cardinal Séan O'Malley of Boston was at that meeting. He recalls the event in the just released book, *Benedict XVI: Essays and Reflections on his Papacy*. (Full disclosure: I'm the editor.) The book is available in bookstores and on Amazon.com.

Here in Cardinal O'Malley's own words:

"Prior to Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the United States in 2008, much discussion took place about whether or not the Holy Father would address the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Once the pope arrived, his words and actions made clear that he would not avoid this painful reality. In the midst of Pope Benedict's second day in Washington, two of my colleagues from the Archdiocese of Boston and five survivors of clergy sexual abuse gathered in the chapel at the Vatican embassy for what turned out to be an historic and pivotal meeting with the pope. We spoke with the Holy Father about the impact of the abuse crisis, and heard his message of hope and reconciliation. For many Catholics in the United States, and members of the wider community, this meeting was the high point of the papal visit and one of the Holy Father's most important actions. During our very prayerful and emotional encounter with the Holy Father, we were blessed with an extraordinary opportunity to witness Pope Benedict not only as the leader of our Church, but as our pastor. The Holy Father took care to address each person individually and provided the survivors the time to speak freely. It was evident that at times they shared their painful experiences in a whisper. The Holy Father listened intently, often clasping the survivors' hands, and

responded tenderly and reassuringly. One of the survivors, unable to find words, conveyed her heartache through tears that spoke volumes with her 'sounds of sorrow.' Though we would not hear the pope's private conversation with the woman, by observing her moving from tears to a calmed, smiling expression, we knew that the pope had gently comforted her.

Later that day, she shared with us that the Holy Father had offered his congratulations on learning that she would soon be married. In doing so, the Holy Father helped her to experience a healing moment and to see a future that would hold the promise of renewed hope and joy."

Similar meetings have occurred since then and reveal the pastoral side of the pope who has taken strong steps to address the terrible human sin that has blighted the Catholic Church and been strongly condemned by him. The crime touches him deeply, as he indicated to reporters flying with him to the United States: "I am deeply ashamed and we will do what is possible so this cannot happen again in the future." He went on to say that it is a great suffering for the Church in the United States and for the Church in general and for him personally that this could happen. It is difficult for him to understand how it was possible that priests betray in this way their mission "to these children," he said.

Pope Benedict has enough staff to deal with painful and troublesome matters. That he chooses to become so personally involved in addressing this crisis speaks loudly of his caring, commitment, and leadership.

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HIV/AIDS on the rise in Minnesota 2010 sees largest increase in past 17 years

by Fr. Paul A. Schumacher

The jump in HIV cases in Minnesota deserves our attention. We call to mind what the U.S. bishops said in 1989 with regard to persons with HIV/AIDS: – "We must keep them present to our consciousness, as individuals and a community, and embrace them with unconditional love. The Gospel demands reverence for life in all circumstances. Compassion – love – toward persons infected with HIV is

the only authentic gospel response." Yes, HIV/AIDS is still with us in greater force than ever in the State of Minnesota. Alarming statistics have come out that this last year in Minnesota the number rose to 368, the largest increase in 17 years.

We must remember that this is a 'preventable disease.' Each one must do what we can to inform, urge, and encourage people that this is preventable.

What can we do?

1. Urge everyone to respect their bodies and their sexuality as a precious gift from God.
2. Ask for education for our young people.
3. Talk to your children, your friends, your neighbors.
4. Write to your representative in local, state, and national government asking them to support HIV/AIDS prevention, education, and research.

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