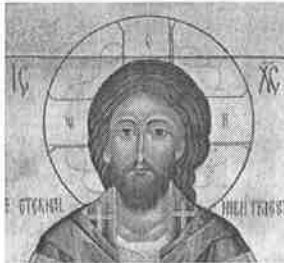




WORD WORSHIP SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

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**Bishop John C. Nienstedt issues statement
Regarding release of John Jay Study**



New Ulm, MN - The John Jay Study covers the last fifty years regarding the scope, effects and causes of clerical sexual abuse. It was commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and conducted by an independent agent, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City. Today's release of these aggregate numbers of accusations, convictions, victims and settlements of the past fifty years are startling to read and no doubt will receive much public attention. Although the numbers of the John Jay study do not tell the whole story, they ought to be understood in a proper context of this present moment; the situation must be evaluated in religious, as well as sociological terms. Our diocese published the information we sent to John Jay in the November 2003 issue of *The Prairie Catholic*. Other dioceses have done the same.

We are fortunate that in 1990 the Diocese of New Ulm adopted policies to deal with incidences of clerical sexual abuse and, at that time, appointed an independent Review Board. The incidences since that time have been few. At the same time, we have worked very hard as a diocese during the past two years to update our policies, to establish programs for Safe Environments, to provide background checks, and to train victim assistance personnel to deal with any allegations regarding sexual misconduct on the part of priests of the Diocese. Never

before had an institution undergone such a comprehensive audit addressing a problem of this kind.

As a baptized Catholic and ordained priest and bishop, I have felt embarrassment, anger, disgust and shame as a result of this scandal that has befallen today's Church. The crisis of clergy sexual abuse is an evil that has risen up before the world and it must be exorcised. The religious cause for the crisis is human infidelity to God's revealed plan and, therefore, the solution lies in a thorough spiritual purification. Fasting, prayer and penance are the only tools for such a process to be achieved. Even though it may cause us to suffer humiliation or be drained of our resources, it is essential that the Church help society to overcome this evil wherever it exists.

This moment in the Church's history calls for both compassion and understanding. It is indeed a time of testing: Can we love, forgive and reach out to others in a new way? Can we show compassion to both victim and perpetrator? Can we forgive Church leaders who made mistakes? Can we spend our money on paying for someone else's sin? We must remember that the ethical teaching of Jesus is to love not just those who love us, but to love those who have offended us or made life difficult for us. Can we then love as Jesus has taught us to love? It is only in the power of Jesus' love that the present moment can be healed and that Catholics can be helped to live out the potential of our baptismal call.

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