

ARCHDIOCESE OF Atlanta, Georgia

The Archdiocese of Atlanta (“the Archdiocese”), which was established in 1956, encompasses 69 counties in northern Georgia. It consists of 75 parishes, 20 missions, and 21 elementary and secondary schools and serves a population of about 367,000 registered Catholics with 150 deacons and 166 archdiocesan priests. The Most Reverend John Francis Donoghue, installed as archbishop in 1993, leads the Archdiocese. A compliance audit of the Archdiocese was conducted during the period of September 29-October 3, 2003.

The information presented below represents conditions as they were found to exist during the week of the audit. Information regarding necessary corrective actions taken by the Archdiocese subsequent to the audit will be found in the last paragraph.

FINDINGS

To Promote Healing And Reconciliation

The Archdiocese has had a prevention policy on sexual abuse of minors since 1990; most recently revised in 2003, this policy provides for an outreach program designed to provide immediate pastoral care to victims/survivors and their families. The archdiocesan Office of Children and Youth Protection, formerly known as Project Aware, has been in existence since 1992. The Archdiocese has a recently appointed victim assistance coordinator, Dr. Ann Price, the director of the Office of Children and Youth Protection, who has a PhD in community psychology. Her predecessor was equally well qualified. A lay review board was originally established in 1995 and currently consists of one priest and seven respected members of the community, including a psychologist, two sexual abuse counselors, and two attorneys. The procedures for making a complaint of abuse are readily available in printed and electronic form. The Archdiocese has entered into no confidentiality agreements since June 2002.

To Guarantee Effective Response To Allegations Of Abuse Of A Minor

The Archdiocese has had contact with local civil authorities regarding sexual abuse allegations, even though no new allegations have been reported to the Archdiocese since June 2002. The archdiocesan policy provides for immediate reporting of allegations to the appropriate authorities. The Archdiocese has a procedure for advising victims/survivors of their right to report allegations of sexual abuse of minors by a member of the clergy to civil authorities. The Archdiocese has established a clear and well-publicized code of conduct for all church personnel, including priests and deacons. The Archdiocese has an excellent communications policy, reflecting the archbishop’s pledge to be open and transparent on issues regarding the sexual abuse of children. A Commendation was written regarding this policy.

To Ensure Accountability Of Procedures

The Archdiocese has participated in the research study regarding the “nature and scope” of the problem of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy.

To Protect The Faithful In The Future

The Archdiocese selected a series of safe environment seminars, beginning in 1992 and provided by Church Law and Tax Report, for presentation to all clergy and adults having regular contact with children; however, these programs were found not to have been completely implemented. The Archdiocese also adopted a safe environment program for grade levels K-5, but no program has been provided to the religious education classes. A Recommendation was written to correct this deficiency. As mentioned above, the Archdiocese has publicized standards of conduct for priests and deacons, as well as diocesan employees, volunteers, and any other church personnel in positions of trust who have regular

contact with children and young people. The Archdiocese has completed background investigations on all members of the clergy and was scheduled to begin doing the same for all diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors during September 2003. The Archdiocese has not transferred any priests or deacons who have had credible allegations of sexual abuse of minors lodged against them to any other diocese for ministerial assignment or residence since June 2002. The archbishop and the major superiors of religious orders with a presence in the Archdiocese have coordinated their respective roles regarding issues of allegations of sexual abuse made against a clerical member of a religious institute. The Archdiocese has not had an opportunity to cooperate with other churches, religious bodies, and institutions of learning in conducting research in the area of sexual abuse of minors. The Archdiocese has established screening and evaluative techniques in the selection of candidates for ordination and formation programs for priests.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE *CHARTER*

At the conclusion of this audit, the Archdiocese of Atlanta was issued one Recommendation and one Commendation.

RECOMMENDATION—That the Archdiocese should work to develop and administer safe environment training to those who have not received it.

COMMENDATION—For the Archdiocese’s excellent communications policy, which reflects a commitment to transparency and openness.

As of December 1, 2003, the Recommendation had been addressed. The Archdiocese of Atlanta is found to be compliant with the provisions of the *Charter* as measured by the process described in Chapter 2 in Section I.

The compliance audit measured activity that has occurred since the adoption of the Charter in June 2002, with the exception of certain mandated actions found in Articles 5 and 14. Actions taken by the diocese/eparchy prior to June 2002 to address allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests and deacons are not included in this summary report.