

ANNUAL CHILD PROTECTION REPORT

Protecting Innocents

The victimization of children is a very real and present danger in our culture. Glance through any newspaper, watch the nightly news broadcasts or tune in to an evening news magazine show and you are likely to confront frightening stories of adult predators, anguished communities and shattered young lives. Most shocking in these revelations is that the predator is often one trusted by the family and community: a teacher, coach or even a priest. Scattered in the wake of these events are damaged lives, destroyed trust and families suspicious of anyone who interacts with children. From everything we have discovered in the last decade concerning this problem of child sexual abuse, one might come to doubt the possibility of maintaining safe and nurturing communities where caring adults and children may interact and grow together.

The Diocese of Arlington is committed to maintaining environments within our parishes and schools where children can be safe to grow in grace and wisdom. Through policies established by Arlington Bishop John R. Keating in 1991 and strengthened by Bishop Paul S. Loverde, it is hoped that child sexual abuse can be prevented in every youth activity within the diocese. The *Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct* is a comprehensive and systematic program designed to protect children.

The programs that are in place throughout the diocese are fully in accord with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The child protection policies and programs of the diocese were established to protect children by following five principles.

1. Know the Warning Signs

While child predators can come from any socioeconomic class or educational level, they have one thing in common. The common factor is a specific group of behaviors known as “grooming.” “Grooming” behaviors are behaviors that attempt to form a bond of dependence between the perpetrator and the victim. The purpose of these behaviors is to make the child hesitant to reveal the abuse.

“Physical grooming” consists of behaviors that desensitize the child to the touch of the perpetrator and confuse the child about boundary violations. “Physical grooming” often includes tickling and wrestling.

“Emotional grooming” includes behaviors that seek to make the child dependent on the abuser. “Emotional grooming” might include gift giving or allowing the child to participate in activities that parents would not allow, such as the sharing of alcohol, drugs or exposure to pornography.

“Community grooming” consists of behaviors that seek to gain trust from the community that surrounds the child. The perpetrator seeks to become trusted by the community and depended upon to assist in child activities. This allows the perpetrator greater access to children. If the abuse should later come to light,

“community grooming” leads to denial as members of the community come to the defense of the abuser.

To recognize these “grooming” behaviors, and to take immediate and prudent actions when they are recognized, requires that all persons who work with children be trained to recognize the dynamics of “grooming” behaviors. All employees of the diocese, parishes and schools, and all volunteers who work with children, receive child safety training through the “Protecting God’s Children” program. This four-hour training seminar is considered one of the most effective training programs in the country and is used in over 60 dioceses. It also includes continuing training for professionals and an annual refresher training for all volunteers who work with children.

In the current reporting period, over 2,000 adult employees and volunteers received “Protecting God’s Children” training. Over 30,000 clergy, employees and volunteers have received “Protecting God’s Children” training in the diocese since its introduction and now serve as watchful sentinels, ensuring that children’s interactions with adults are appropriate and safe.

2. Control Access

No one has a “right” to volunteer to work with other people’s children. In fact, there are some people who must be kept away from children. To maintain the safety of children, each and every person who interacts with them must be thoroughly vetted and approved. Every employee and all volunteers working with children must complete criminal background checks. These checks include state and national criminal record searches and a search of the Central Registry of the Virginia Department of Social Services. In the current reporting period, over 2,000 employees and volunteers underwent background checks; over 30,000 diocesan employees and volunteers of the diocese have completed these checks since August 2004.

A formal application process for anyone working with children is vital. As a part of this formal application process, references are checked to ensure that past behaviors are not overlooked. A formal interview is also required so that the Church’s commitment to the safety of children can be clearly expressed and the programs in place to protect children can be explained.

3. Monitor Programs

All programs sponsored by the Church must be reviewed and approved by principals and pastors. This review process ensures that those adults involved have completed all training and background checks and are approved to interact with children. This process also helps ensure that sufficient adult supervision is being used to safeguard children.

Monitoring also involves the direct supervisor interacting with all programs. This includes visiting classes, observing programs to ensure that all policies are being followed and securing or monitoring areas where children could be isolated.

4. Be Aware

Studies have indicated that more than 90 percent of children who have been sexually abused do not reveal that abuse has occurred. Recovery from sexual abuse is largely influenced by the type of abuse and the length of time over which the abuse occurred. It is acutely important that young people advise their parent or another safe adult as soon as they become uncomfortable or frightened. Being aware of what is going on in young people’s lives, while primarily the role of parents, is also a role shared by other trusted adults. Preventing abuse is the role of adults, and child programs that might shift the burden of responsibility to children should be avoided. However, programs that encourage children to confide in parents and other trusted adults can be effective in revealing abuse or potentially abusive situations, and can limit contact with predators.

Research indicates that children who had been abused and had been previously trained in safety programs reported their abuse at four times the rate of children who had not received training. The Diocese of Arlington provides such training in “Formation in Christian Chastity,” which is a part of all religious education programs and Catholic schools’ curricula. Since the program was initiated in 2005, over 65,000 children have received training.

Teenagers face special challenges coming to understand appropriate intimacy and the dangers of manipulation masquerading as special friendship. To help explain these challenges the diocese provides a separate program for teenagers titled “You Matter.” Both of these training programs can be reviewed at www.arlingtondiocese.org.

5. Communicate Concerns

Once inappropriate behaviors have been noted in the actions of some adults, this issue must be directly addressed. Employees and volunteers are trained to address their concerns to the individuals involved in interactions with children that seem to be inappropriate. They are guided in these discussions by the *Code of Conduct*, which is required to be received and signed by all persons within the diocese who interact with children. These are clear guidelines of what are considered appropriate and inappropriate behaviors when interacting with children. They are also trained to address these behaviors with supervisors if such behaviors continue. If child abuse is suspected, employees and all volunteers will report such suspicions to Child Protective Services for the appropriate city or county.

Conclusion

All personnel of the diocese are mandatory reporters under diocesan policy and have an obligation to report suspicions of child abuse. Once suspicions are reported to civil authorities, personnel also report to Church officials to ensure immediate actions are taken to maintain the safety of the children under our care. These five principles — knowing the warning signs, controlling access, monitoring programs, being aware and communicating concerns — constitute a comprehensive approach to keeping children safe from any person who might seek to harm them.

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Maintaining these programs and improving them is the goal of the Office of Child Protection and Safety for the Diocese of Arlington. With the help of the thousands of volunteers and employees of the diocese who work with young people, we can prevent this danger in the lives of our children.

Annual Report of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington's Child Protection Advisory Board

Background

This is our fifth annual report to Bishop Paul S. Loverde.

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington's Child Protection Advisory Board was formed at the direction of Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde in late summer of 2003 as an unique effort to assist in organizing a proper approach to the protection of children in the Arlington Diocese. Specifically, our board serves in an advisory role to the diocesan bishop in the formulation of child sexual abuse policies and procedures. The diocesan effort is directed pursuant to the *Catholic Diocese of Arlington Policy on the Protection of Children/Young People and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and/or Child Abuse* established in 1991; and in conformity with the word and spirit of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at the November 2002 general meeting. The formation of the Advisory Board is not required by the *Charter*. It is a unique effort by Bishop Loverde to bring the voice, vision and experience of qualified, independent, professional members of the Catholic community to support the development of proper background checks and awareness training programs designed to protect children from abuse, sexual exploitation and neglect. Board members are appointed for five-year terms and may be re-appointed. The function of the Advisory Board is to also examine how the diocese responds to an allegation, what services are offered to victims/survivors as well as clergy who are accused of sexual abuse, and to provide advice to the Bishop.

Over the last few years the board reviewed the diocesan sexual misconduct policy and assisted the diocese in implementing the "safe environment" for children that the *Charter* envisioned. In addition, the Advisory Board promoted healing for victims and survivors and recommended speakers and educational programs for employees and volunteers of the diocese. In order to accomplish this, the Advisory Board reviewed existing programs and established new programs specifically for this purpose. For more information on the Review and Advisory Boards, please see the *Catholic Diocese of Arlington Policy on the Protection of Children and Young People and Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and/or Child Abuse* on the Child Protection Pages of the diocesan Web site, www.arlingtondiocese.org.

Board Activities

The Advisory Board welcomed the new appointments of Reverend Alexander Drummond and Sister Susan Louise Eder O.S.F.S. Father Drummond replaced Father Dennis Kleinmann, whose service on the board for the past five years is to be commended. Sister Susan Louise Eder is a diocesan school principal and satisfies the desire by the Advisory Board for diocesan school representation. We also welcome the addition of Kathryn Kramer, M.S.W., L.C.S.W., as a new Victim Assistance Coordinator working with Victim Assistance Coordinator Patricia Mudd, M.S.W., A.C.S.W. Ms. Kramer joins the diocese from the Alexandria Department of Social Services Foster Care where she worked with victims of abuse, both children and adults.

The Advisory Board provided advice to the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinators regarding attendance issues with their drop-in Support Group Meetings. The Advisory Board recommended that due to minimal attendance at the meetings, the Victim Assistance Coordinators should discontinue the meetings and increase the well-attended Support Group meetings with Bishop Loverde, Father Mealey O.S.F.S., Father Specht and the Victim Assistance Coordinators at the Dominican Retreat House in McLean, VA. Changes in plans for Support Group Meetings at the Dominican Retreat House include holding two group meetings each year with victims/survivors of clergy childhood, sexual abuse, one group meeting for childhood victims of incest and violence in the community and one group meeting for victims/survivors who were involved in inappropriate or abusive relationships as adults, with clergy, religious or an employee of the Church. The Advisory Board supports these changes and believes they will contribute to more widely attended and in-depth spiritual assistance to victims.

A joint meeting of the Advisory Board and the Diocesan Review Board was sponsored by Bishop Loverde. The guest speaker was Teresa Kettlekamp, Executive Director of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The attendees at the joint meeting heard an update from the Bishop and also received a powerful presentation regarding accountability.

As an additional proactive effort, the Advisory Board looks forward to reviewing the work by the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinators with Diocesan schools to help them locate individuals and training materials for character development for students.

Conclusion

The Advisory Board again applauds the efforts of the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinators and encourages the continuation of Masses and Prayer Services for healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse as well as the Support Groups for victims/survivors of sexual abuse at Dominican Retreat House with the participation of Bishop Loverde, Father Mealey, Father Specht, Kathryn Kramer and Patricia Mudd. The Advisory Board has encouraged an open and supportive outreach to victims/survivors of sexual abuse and has monitored the diocese's victim

assistance efforts by receiving periodic reports from the Victim Assistance Coordinators. Please see below for the Report of the Victim Assistance Coordinators.

The Advisory Board has consistently promoted the key elements in supporting the *Charter* which continues to include an effective background check program to help control access to children, training to increase awareness and a Code of Conduct to clearly distinguish inappropriate behavior. The Arlington Diocese has not been, and will not be, immune to threats from abusers within our diocesan family. However, efforts by the diocese and parish leadership continue to demonstrate a robust, proactive effort to prevent the abuse of our most precious assets — our children.

The Advisory Board would like to again commend the outstanding efforts and achievements of Father Terry Specht, Director of the Diocesan Child Protection and Safety Program, and Patricia Mudd, Victim Assistance Coordinator for the diocese. We would also like to especially commend Bishop Loverde for his leadership and personal dedication to these serious issues. It continues to be our privilege to provide advice to the Bishop to ensure that our diocese is in full compliance with all aspects of the *Charter* and that its child protection program and programs for victims/survivors are the most effective in our national Catholic community.

Very respectfully submitted,

*James M. Byrne, Esq., Chairman
Mila R. Tecala, LCSW, Vice Chairperson
Richard Perry, M.D. Secretary
Patricia Dalton, Ph.D.
James McGuire
John Dillon, M.D.
Teresa Hartnett
Fr. Alexander Drummond
Sister Susan Louise Eder, O.S.F.S.*

Victim Assistance Coordinators Report to the Diocese of Arlington

(Report covers the Audit Period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008)

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington adheres to *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, which calls for dioceses to "reach out to victims/survivors and their families and demonstrate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well being. The first obligation of the Church with regard to victims is for healing and reconciliation." According to the *Charter*, the Diocese is to provide outreach to those who have been the victims of childhood sexual abuse by anyone in church service. The *Charter* specifies that this outreach will include counseling, spiritual assistance and support groups. In addition, Bishop Paul S. Loverde has encouraged the Victim Assistance Coordinators of the Diocese of Arlington to provide assistance to victims/survivors of abuse by family members, acquaintances, violence on the streets and inappropriate adult relationships.

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During the Audit Period from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008, the Victim Assistance Coordinator received 56 calls to report such instances of sexual abuse or to request assistance. The Diocese received calls from, or about, 8 victims/survivors with allegations of sexual abuse by clergy or religious order priests. Of this number, there was one allegation against a priest of the Diocese of Arlington. This allegation was first made to Child Protective Services (C.P.S.) before the call was made to the diocese. After an investigation by C.P.S., the allegation was found not to be credible. Subsequently, the Review Board of the Diocese of Arlington was advised of this allegation and of the C.P.S. determination. There were 7 additional allegations of abuse by priests or religious from other dioceses or religious orders. The Victim Assistance Coordinator assisted the victims/survivors in reporting allegations of abuse to the religious order and to the diocese where the priest or deacon is incardinated, which in turn notified the civil authorities. An additional 48 victims/survivors of non-Church related sexual abuse have requested referrals for counseling and spiritual assistance and attended our Masses, Prayer Services or Support Group Meetings at Dominican Retreat. In addition, 34 victims/survivors who requested assistance prior to the beginning of this audit year continue to receive assistance and participate in the various services offered by the Diocese of Arlington.

Moreover, the Diocese of Arlington has celebrated Masses and Prayer Services to pray for healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse and hosted Support Group Evenings with Bishop Loverde at Dominican Retreat. During this audit period, Bishop Loverde celebrated 3 Masses for this intention at various parishes around the diocese: St. Bernadette, Springfield; St. James, Falls Church; and St. Joseph, Herndon. A total of 23 Masses have been celebrated in the Diocese of Arlington from June 2004 to June 2008 to pray for healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse, with an estimated 1,730 people in attendance. In addition, Father Mark Mealey, Vicar General, has celebrated 3 Prayer Services for healing for victims/survivors at St. Agnes, Arlington; St. John Bosco, Woodstock; and St. John Neumann, Reston, for a total of 11 Prayer Services since April 2005. Victim testimony has been an interesting and helpful part of the Prayer Services as it includes a survivor's sharing of his/her spiritual journey towards greater healing from sexual abuse.

We have 3 victims/survivors who have shared their struggles and efforts to heal at the Prayer Services. We estimate that 200 people have attended the Prayer Services since their inception in 2005. Both the Masses and Prayer Services are followed by a reception where victims/survivors have the opportunity to speak with Bishop Loverde, Father Mealey and the Victim Assistance Coordinators.

The Diocese of Arlington began a monthly drop-in Support Group in September 2006. This group ran for 10 months out of the year, taking a 2 month break in the summer. Beginning in September 2007, we held the group at Catholic Charities Children's Services office in Burke, Virginia.

Since December 2005, Bishop Loverde has invited victims/survivors and their spouse or a support person to Support Group meetings at Dominican Retreat. We had three such meetings in this audit period and a total of 186 people attended since the inception of the program. The evenings consist of dinner, a discussion and Prayer Service. Victims/survivors share their struggles with the pain of abuse and efforts to heal and be reconciled with the Church. These meetings have been very powerful, with Bishop Loverde and the other diocesan staff listening to victims' struggles and praying with them for their healing. We have all learned a great deal about the effect of abuse on the lives and faith of our survivors. Beginning in the fall of 2008, we added a fourth meeting each year and refocused the group on spiritual assistance. We specified that two meetings each year would be for victims/survivors of childhood sexual abuse by clergy, one meeting would be for childhood victims/survivors of incest, and a fourth meeting would be for victims/survivors involved in inappropriate or abusive relationships as adults. Spouses or a support person are also invited. We have had two such meetings and generally are pleased with this change, which assigns people to like groups according to their experience. The discussions are more in-depth and seem to be more focused on spiritual topics.

As you know, Bishop Loverde has opened this ministry to victims/survivors of clerical abuse, as well as others who were abused by family or by violence in the community. At this point, we have over 200 victims/survivors who have called the Diocese of Arlington for assistance.

This year, the diocese hired a second Victim Assistance Coordinator, Kathryn Kramer. Kathryn has a Bachelor's degree from Catholic University in English, a Master's in English from the University of Maryland and a Master of Social Work degree from Catholic University. She was a student intern at Hearts and Homes for Youth in Silver Spring and an intern and employee with 3+ years experience at the Alexandria Department of Social Services as a foster care worker. Kathryn's arrival was particularly well timed since the Office of Catholic Schools has recently asked us to provide some pastoral care to students.

In the Diocese of Arlington, we have a group of diocesan and religious order priests who are providing spiritual assistance to victims/survivors of sexual abuse. We invite victims/survivors to meet with them for spiritual assistance.

In 2006, we established a Survivors Planning Group. This is a group of victims/survivors who have been involved in our programs and who periodically meet with Father Mealey and the Victim Assistance Coordinators to offer suggestions about our program. We meet 2 or 3 times a year. The Survivors Planning Group made some suggestions for improved content to the Web site, offered to help develop a brochure, on which they are now working, and expressed a willingness to speak before community groups about their experiences, which three members have done. Their latest interest is to help us with a conference on sexual abuse for diocesan employees. During the most recent Advent Day of Recollection for Diocesan staff, Monsignor Kenney, of Baltimore, suggested that we "Listen,

so we may serve." This seems like an important reminder for our program.

We would like to personally thank Bishop Loverde, Father Mealey and Father Specht for their concern and support for victims/survivors of sexual abuse. The Diocese of Arlington is one of the few dioceses celebrating Masses and Prayer Services for healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse, as well as hosting dinners, discussions and Prayer Services, during which Bishop Loverde, Father Mealey and Father Specht take time to listen to the pain and struggles of our victims. We have had many victims thank us for the additional efforts. We want to publicly acknowledge the efforts of our bishop and priests. We also want to thank our Diocesan Review and Advisory Boards for the work they do on behalf of our victims/survivors.

Our schedule of Masses, Prayer Services and Support Group Meetings with Bishop Loverde is included in this report. We invite our victims/survivors to the Masses, Prayer Services and Dominican Retreat. We would also like to encourage the diocesan community to join us at the Masses and Prayer Services to pray for healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse.

Very respectfully submitted by Patricia Mudd and Kathryn Kramer, Victim Assistance Coordinators

Victim Testimony

Pat and Kate, the Victim Assistance Coordinators, asked me to write this article to share with you my personal experience with sexual abuse by a priest. For me, it's a new and wonderful opportunity to unburden myself of something that very strongly influenced my life. I see the invitation to write this as an "opportunity," because I can see now how relating my story can have some very positive effects on another's need to come forward and unburden themselves, enjoy the blessings of healing, and make the leap from victim to survivor. What I strive for now is to celebrate life as God intended us to live it - to the fullest, unburdened. It's a picture that's been in process for close to 50 years.

I believe the difficulty is that sexual abuse is about a violation of a gift of life and spirit that is so fundamentally individual and personal. It is a violation that is utterly shameful, and the shame is borne not by the abuser, but by the abused. This shame is toxic; it's not some passing moment of pain and embarrassment. It can poison individual lives and the lives of their loved ones.

In May of 2004, at the beginning of my most recent, ongoing effort at disclosure and reaching out and getting help, I filed a "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor" with the responsible archdiocese. (My abuse did not happen in Virginia; I moved here as an adult). In the "Information as to Allegations" section I wrote: "Summer 1960 - Summer 1961; St. Theresa's rectory, Fr. Dan's bedroom; a number of incidents; I was an altar boy; he said he was sick." He said he needed "help," and I complied until he said something that made me realize how sick he really was. I listed the details of those incidents of my abuse

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that continued until I told my parents and the abuse finally stopped.

I didn't know the term "victim" in this context; I didn't know anything beyond somehow being "involved with" the priest. I had just turned fourteen; I was going to be a freshman in high school in the fall. It was a relationship I had with someone I respected, even loved, and looked to as a mentor, like a coach. I recall now how he asked me once, "How do you feel about our relationship?" My response: "It's like I have three fathers, my dad, God and you." I guess I was pretty well "groomed," as I was to learn decades later. I'd even signed the letters to him from scout camp, "love." It felt rather strange, but that's what he'd wanted and I didn't want to disappoint him.

Lying awake one night in 1961, I wondered what to do about this situation I was in. How blessed I was and am to have realized that one option was to tell my mom. She listened and told my dad. They were distressed, clearly, but calm, comforting and loving. They went to our pastor and, a short time later, Fr. Dan told me he had to go away. I felt a combination of anger with him and mostly relief. And life went on, more or less, as it had before.

I graduated high school, went on to college with an ROTC scholarship and entered the Navy. I met that very special girl and, between Navy deployments, we were married. I didn't tell her about my abuse history. Out of the Navy, we explored and worked our way up the West Coast from San Diego, California to Bellingham, Washington. Every chance we got, we took in the magnificence of the sea coast and the mountains and canyons as we hiked and camped along wilderness trails and shores. All in all, we had a pretty nice life together, but something was increasingly strained, not quite right: I found myself increasingly moody, often irritable and angry. I felt unsure of what I was doing with my life. Our communications had somehow hit a wall. We tried the "Marriage Encounter" weekend. I learned to make a distinction between what one feels and what one thinks about something. What I thought was or should be good, I often felt uncomfortable about. We resolved to communicate more patiently, lovingly and effectively.

Communication, whole and intimate, is the protein of a healthy, growing marriage. The real intimacy, however, is not going to happen if one or the other is somehow withholding or has something locked up within them. I was increasingly defensive about any suggestion that I wasn't communicative. Looking back, it's as if I were struggling with some dark cloud I could not name, let alone talk about. I didn't know it then, but trying to bury the residue of sexual abuse and just get on with one's life is like trying to build a healthy, happy home on a toxic waste dump.

I had always thought I'd like to go to graduate school and she decided she would go too. We both went, but a long way apart: I stayed in Seattle; she went out to Bloomington, Indiana. The initial plan of four years stretched out to ten, as neither of us was making great progress, and we spent our Christmas and summer holidays together in Seattle. A good part of my survival routine, along with running and swimming, was heavy doses of healing prayer, weekday Mass, the rosary, lots of self help books and personal journaling. I'd also

started getting some counseling to deal with my long standing problems with concentration and self-image. All the while my frustration, anger and resentment about being stalled in my studies and separated from my wife festered and flashed.

Then one evening during a Christmas visit together, when I was doing my squirrely best at "communicating," my very frustrated wife grabbed my latest self help book, broke its spine and tore it in half, exclaiming, "What are you so guilty about, anyway?!" Suddenly, the shadow, that toxic creature, was outed; I blurted out what I'd never been able to or attempted to reveal to her before about that long ago abuse. She understood, or at least she could now discern, something behind the wedge in our marriage. The wall was breached; the tears and the words came. Midway through the following year, we moved back together to our home in Bellingham.

That initial exposure of the demon led to further breakthroughs, gradually and over many more years. We moved to the Diocese of Arlington, and I finally brought it out in confession. I tried to expose and shed what I felt to be hindering my relationship with Jesus, this thing I felt angered me with Him. Face to face, in the light, the priest said, "Come see me, you need to talk about this." And I did. He referred me to the Office of Victim Assistance here in the Diocese of Arlington. Then counseling followed, with professionals who are all too familiar with the whole sad, painful routine. From that counseling, I realized the fruits of bringing it to light, the truth about the distinction between a child's "going along with" abuse and the adult's "complicity" in an affair, and the pathetic nature of the sick soul with whom the responsibility and shame should properly rest - the abuser. Now, I look to moving from being a survivor to truly celebrating life with my wife, family, friends and community.

A recent Gospel reading about the paralytic hit a chord with my journey. The paralyzed man is carried through the crowd and lowered through the roof, so that Jesus might recognize the faith of the friends who'd brought him, forgive his sins and heal him. I am reminded once more what the sacraments are for. Our Baltimore catechism defines a sacrament as "an outward sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace." So, what is grace? It's what heals us. All of the sacraments, Confession, Eucharist, Marriage -- all seven are for healing and bringing us to life in the fullest.

To others out there, I offer this: tell your story; be assured you are believed; discover you are not alone; learn and believe it was not your fault. These are the essential steps a person must take to find healing from sexual abuse. But it's never an easy journey. You have to go from the realization of how much you hurt inside, from an instance of intimate and personal abuse that may have occurred long ago, to a place of reassurance, trust and mutual sharing where you can really begin to heal. Four years ago, almost five now, I found that place right here in our Diocese. When you're not burning with anger, the place your abuser left you is cold, dark and painfully lonely. We don't have to be there. The Diocese of Arlington has an office of wonderful people (Fr. Specht, Fr. Mealey, Pat Mudd, Kate Kramer and others) devoted to reaching out to people like me and perhaps you

who read this. We learn that gratitude is the antidote for resentment and I'm indeed grateful for the opportunity to share my experience with you. Come, surely it's the season to learn and believe what your rightful inheritance is: not shame, but glory.

Masses and Prayer Services to Pray for Healing for Victims/Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Support Group Meetings

Saturday, April 25, 2009
Prayer Service at 10:00 A.M.

St. Louis

2907 Popkins Lane
Alexandria, VA 22306
Rev. Mark Mealey to preside
Victim Testimony

Monday, June 8, 2009
Bilingual Mass at 7:30 P.M.

St. Francis of Assisi

18825 Fuller Heights Road
Triangle, VA 22172
Bishop Paul S. Loverde to preside

This spring, **Bishop Loverde is hosting two different Support Group Meetings at Dominican Retreat**, 7103 Old Dominion Drive, McLean, VA 22101, intended for two different groups of people. The first meeting on **Monday, May 4, 2009**, will be for victims/survivors of clergy childhood sexual abuse and their spouse or support person. The second meeting on **Tuesday, May 19, 2009**, will be for victims/survivors who were involved in inappropriate or abusive relationships as adults, with clergy, religious or an employee of the Church, and their spouse or support person.

The evening begins at **5:45 P.M.**
and will end by 9:00 P.M.
A light meal will be served along with discussion and a Prayer Service.

Please RSVP four days prior to the meeting to one of the telephone numbers below.

Victim Assistance Coordinators
Kathryn Kramer: 703-841-2759
Patricia Mudd: 703-841-2530

The Diocese of Arlington provides comprehensive assistance to anyone who, as a minor, was sexually abused by a priest, deacon, teacher, employee or representative of the diocese. Parents, guardians, children and survivors of sexual abuse are invited and encouraged to contact the diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinators, experienced social workers who will provide confidential consultation.

The Diocese of Arlington is committed to assisting victims/survivors throughout the healing process. For further information, visit www.arlingtondiocese.org.