



Statement of William Gavin

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In June 2002, the bishops promised to take measures to prevent child abuse from occurring in the future and to ensure that all church leaders would address any allegation of misconduct swiftly and properly. During its Dallas meeting, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which stipulated that each diocese would implement specific policies and procedures.

The Dallas Charter was not the first time the Bishops attempted to cleanse the Church of the scourge of child abuse. Recognizing that guidelines adopted in 1992 and other efforts had been less than successful, the Bishops agreed through the Dallas Charter to open their dioceses to review by an independent audit. I was the auditor selected and charged with determining the degree to which each of the dioceses and eparchies had complied with their promise to implement the provisions of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

From June through November, 2003, 54 auditors visited 191 Catholic Dioceses and Eparchies in the United States. We traveled in teams of two to six auditors for on sight visits of approximately one week depending upon the size and circumstances of the diocese. We reviewed the diocesan policies of dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors and interviewed the diocesan leadership, those working with abuse victims, and also with some victims who had reported abuse subsequent to the adoption of the Charter in June 2002. We interviewed many Prosecutors and representatives of law enforcement regarding their relationships with the Dioceses and Eparchies. We assessed these diocesan policies to respond to abuse complaints; sought evidence of outreach programs for victims of abuse; judged how the largely lay review boards that monitor abuse cases were utilized; looked for policies on removing from ministry priests who have abused children and youth; and documented the existence of Safe Environment Programs to prevent abuse from occurring in the future. We had free reign as to where we could look to find answers to our questions.

The depth and scope of the process was not compromised. I spent 28 years in the FBI and retired as the Assistant Director of the Bureau in charge of The New York Office. I was responsible for the oversight of the investigation of the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. In addition, I had been the Assistant Director of the FBI at headquarters and for three years had the overall responsibility for auditing every FBI office for compliance with rules and regulations and for the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of operations.

To assist me in the audits of the dioceses and eparchies, I selected 54 individuals, most of whom were former FBI agents and other investigators. A weeklong training session was conducted for all auditors to familiarize them with the objective, scope and methods that would be used in the process and to infuse in them the importance of the task. I selected

individuals who demonstrated a passion for doing the right thing for children. I did not make religion one of the criteria for selection.

Workshops were also conducted for all of the Bishops to familiarize them with the audit instrument and the audit process. It was a difficult endeavor. Difficult for the clergy, as it was really the first time that the laity has had such in-depth access to the problem of sexual abuse of minors within each Diocese. It was difficult for the auditors, as they worked very hard to uphold the principles of a valid audit and remain sensitive to the concerns of the victims and the clergy.

Today's report provides a national profile of the efforts of the church as well as individual reports of the 191 dioceses and eparchies audited. One hundred thirty-one Instructions and 297 Recommendations were issued. At the time all of the information was sent for printing, 157 of the 191 Dioceses and Eparchies had addressed all outstanding Recommendations and Instructions. Thirty-four Dioceses and Eparchies still have Instructions and Recommendations in the process of remediation.

We found, among the large and small, urban and rural dioceses, the differences one might expect in looking at such a variety of administrative offices. Were there things that were wrong? Yes, and we note these instances in our report. The dioceses which showed shortcomings received guidance as to how to correct the inadequacies. Other dioceses showed that they had implemented the appropriate procedures long before the Dallas Charter was adopted. As the headlines of 2002 underscored, the reality is that there were indeed large disparities as to how the issue of priest abusers had been addressed.

In its most basic form, what the American public will see when they examine this report is an extraordinary report card. It shows the extent to which the bishops have integrated the good intentions of the Dallas Charter into their diocesan administration. I encourage all Catholics, in fact all Americans, to see how their local diocese is doing. The 65 million Catholics in America demanded accountability. Catholics and non Catholics alike questioned the credibility of the church. The audit report released today is a milestone no one should overlook.

Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to the Bishops and their staffs for their devotion in addressing the problem of sexual abuse of Children and Minors, to the auditors for those countless hours spent to produce their portion of the details of this report. I wish also to express my appreciation to the National Review Board for their support and dedication to the audit process.

The constant support of Kathleen McChesney and Sheila Horan of the Office of Child and Youth Protection went well beyond expectations of my office and was greatly appreciated.