



## **Most Reverend Robert W. Finn**

Bishop

Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

### **Bishop Finn's Five-Point Plan**

Diocese engages Todd Graves, former U.S. Department of Justice child exploitation expert and former U.S. Attorney

**June 9, 2011**

**(KANSAS CITY, MO, June 9, 2011)** - To immediately fulfill his "call for change," Bishop Robert Finn, of the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St Joseph, today announced the first immediate five points of a sweeping plan to deal with recent alleged sexual misconduct in the diocese.

The diocese said further initiatives will be announced in the coming weeks.

#### **The Initial Five-point Plan**

1. Immediate appointment of former national co-chair of the Department of Justice Child Exploitation Working Group and former U.S. Attorney to conduct an independent investigation of events, policies and procedures,
2. Appointment of an independent public liaison and ombudsman to field and investigate any reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior,
3. Reaffirmation of current diocesan policy and immediate commencement of an independent review of the policies for Ethical Codes of Conduct and Sexual Misconduct,
4. An in-depth review of diocesan personnel training regarding the Ethical Codes of Conduct and the policy on Sexual Misconduct,
5. Continued cooperation with local law enforcement.

Bishop Finn stated, "These are initial steps. Other actions are forthcoming."

### **Former U.S. Attorney Engaged**

Former U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Missouri Todd P. Graves will conduct an independent review of all issues regarding the Ratigan matter, as well as lead an independent and complete review of the diocesan Ethical Codes of Conduct and Sexual Misconduct policies, procedures and training.

From 2001 to 2005, Mr. Graves served as the national co-chair of the Department of Justice Child Exploitation Working Group. As U.S. Attorney, he established state and federal task forces to investigate exploitation of children through the Internet and was instrumental in locating a Regional Computer Forensics Laboratory in Kansas City. Throughout his career, Mr. Graves has been at the forefront in enforcing laws against those who abuse children.

Bishop Finn said the review will bring clarity out of the “shame, anger, and confusion” surrounding the May 19 arrest of Father Shawn Ratigan, who faces charges of possession of child pornography.

“In addition to our ongoing and full cooperation with law enforcement, this review will help us to determine the effectiveness of diocesan policies and procedures in a very troubling situation,” the Bishop explained.

At the conclusion of the review, Mr. Graves will issue a report. The report will be made public. The review is estimated to take approximately 30 to 45 days. Bishop Finn pledged the complete cooperation of all diocesan personnel.

### **Appointment of Public Liaison and Ombudsman**

In the coming weeks, Bishop Finn will appoint a public liaison and ombudsman as the receiving agent and initial investigation point for any reports of misconduct by a diocesan priest, deacon, employee or program volunteer.

The public liaison and ombudsman will screen and investigate any reports on complaints made and consult with law enforcement as appropriate. The ombudsman will be available to anyone who wishes to report a concern through a confidential telephone number and email address.

“This immediate action will ensure all concerns are addressed confidentially, respectfully,

promptly and appropriately,” said Bishop Finn.

### **Reaffirmation of Current Diocesan Policies**

While awaiting recommendations for changes resulting from the independent internal investigation, Bishop Finn reaffirmed current diocesan policies that guide the response to reports of abuse. Members of the clergy and diocesan employees have been advised to review the Ethical Codes of Conduct and the policy regarding Sexual Misconduct.

As early as 1988, the diocese adopted a formal policy for responding to allegations of sexual abuse. The policy established a Diocesan Response Team to provide support for persons making complaints. The policy required full cooperation with the laws of Missouri for reporting child sexual abuse. By 1993, diocesan practice reflected growing lay involvement with the creation of an Independent Review Board.

### **Diocesan Policies Require**

- protecting children in all church, school and program settings,
- pending a full investigation, removing ministers and employees from service when reasonable suspicion exists,
- counseling and pastoral support for persons making a complaint,
- advising people making complaints of their rights to go to civil authorities or the media, and,
- ensuring that lay professionals respond to and give advice about complaints and fitness for ministry.

In 2002, the diocese mandated multi-jurisdictional criminal background screening and safe environment training for all adults working or volunteering with children. The Protecting God's Children program identifies the warning signs of abuse and teaches strategies for maintaining safe environments for children. By May 2011, this program had reached more than 20,500 people.

“The best way to deal with a problem is to prevent wrongdoing,” said Bishop Finn. “We believe that, when adults who interact with children increase their awareness of child sexual abuse, they form a shield that protects children,” he said.

As a companion to the adult safe environment training, the diocese implemented developmen-

tally appropriate personal safety training for all children and youth in 2006. Through Catholic schools and parish programs the diocese reaches some 16,000 children each year. Circle of Grace is an ongoing part of the curricula for all Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade, and Called to Protect reaches all high school aged students.

### **Apology**

The Bishop concluded with the words he delivered to the diocese this past Sunday:

“As bishop, I take full responsibility for these failures and sincerely apologize to you for them. Clearly, we have to do more,” said Bishop Finn. “While we must deal with these difficult and trying issues, we also must give thanks for the daily accomplishments of our lay faithful, priests and others for the many good works that continue on behalf of neighbors, sick or poor, young or old.”