



Archdiocese of Newark
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

February 7, 2013

My Dear Brother in the Priesthood of Christ,

I know that during this past week each of you has been dealing in some way with the after-effects of media reports claiming that the Archdiocese is not following the terms or spirit of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, a document I helped craft in 2002. These claims are baseless.

I want each of you to understand what the requirements of the Charter are, and how we continue to abide by the terms not only of this document, but also of the more local and equally important *Memorandum of Understanding* among the Catholic Dioceses of New Jersey, the Attorney General of New Jersey, and the County Prosecutors of the State.

The Charter calls for the Church to be open in terms of how it addresses cases of sexual misconduct. *The Archdiocese has informed law enforcement, and cooperated with the authorities, on all cases that have come to our attention.* We report all allegations of sexual misconduct to the local County Prosecutor immediately upon receipt, and we await the Prosecutor's decision on whether to prosecute a case before taking any action under Canon Law. Further, if an Archdiocesan priest or deacon is in active ministry when an allegation is received, that priest or deacon steps away from ministry until the matter is dealt with fully both by the Prosecutor and the Church. *We also announce to the local parish that this individual is stepping aside while the matter is being investigated.*

The Charter calls for outreach to victims of abuse. *As I have said on many occasions, this is a standard practice in this Archdiocese at the start of any investigation of an allegation.* We contract with a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, with extensive background in dealing with victims of trauma from sexual abuse, to serve as the Archdiocesan Victim's Assistance Coordinator so that we can assure that people receive appropriate outreach services.

The Charter calls for a Review Board to look into allegations of clergy sexual misconduct. *The Archdiocese of Newark has maintained a Review Board since 1993, almost ten years prior to the existence of the Charter and the requirement to have a Review Board.* This group, consisting primarily of lay people with extensive legal, law enforcement, investigative and clinical experience, is very exhaustive in its investigations. I have always felt that, as my representatives, they have looked both

Archdiocesan Center

171 CUFTON AVENUE • POST OFFICE BOX 9500 • NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07104-0500 • (973) 497-4004 • Fax (973) 497-4018

February 7, 2013

Page 2

carefully and compassionately at the needs and circumstances of victims of clergy sexual abuse. With their participation and recommendations, I have removed priests from ministry for cause. I have also returned priests to ministry based on their recommendations.

The Charter also calls on the Archdiocese to work to restore the reputation of clergy who return to ministry if so permitted. This sometimes can be difficult, because of the notoriety that a particular case involving a priest or deacon may generate. But if the legal process brings a not guilty verdict or dismissal of charges, and the Church's inquiry under the terms of the Charter concludes that no sexual abuse took place, then the Charter requires, and the individual priest deserves, a return to ministry.

The Archdiocese followed all of these elements of the Charter and the Memorandum of Understanding in the more-than-a-decade-old case involving Father Michael Fugee. At the end of the entire process, Father Fugee's acquittal and dismissal of charges, and the Review Board's conclusion that no sexual abuse occurred, guided me in my decision to allow him to return to ministry. It is also important to note that, in reaching my decision, the recommendations of the County Prosecutor regarding Father Fugee's ability to return to ministry and future assignments in ministry carried great weight. We have followed those recommendations fully.

I know that this letter contains much for you to think about and absorb. But I ask you to work as best you can to bring this information to the attention of your parishioners so that the truth about this case, and the reasons why the recent media reports are biased and untrue, can be made known.

We have tried to present these facts to the media representatives who have spoken with us over the past week, but as you have noticed, most of them are not including any of this in their stories.

I thank you for your fortitude at this time, and for all that you do for this local Church, for her people, and for your brother priests.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Myers".

*Most Reverend John J. Myers
Archbishop of Newark /