

BISHOP'S STATEMENT

September 22, 2004

We regret that Attorney Serbin has taken legal action against us, in spite of our ongoing offers to help his clients.

Since April of 2002, Bishop Joseph has asked our Allegation Review Board to examine claims involving sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy. So far, all of these allegations have related to incidences that occurred in the past.

We recognize that some individuals, who were victimized as minors, may not have come forward at that time. The Diocese has tried to create a process that would make it easier for them to seek the help they need, and we as Church should give. The process begins with our Victim Advocate, Sr. Marilyn Welch, CCW, who assists in presenting the allegation to the Review Board. Our policy requires that these adults describe their experience to Bishop Joseph and the Board.

The process appears to be working in a number of cases. Each one that could be reasonably substantiated has received a settlement from the Diocese, including payments for counseling. During the past several months, five persons have been heard through our Diocesan process. We anticipate helping others in the very near future. Although the injury and pain of the victims cannot be erased so easily, we believe that in these cases another step toward healing has been accomplished for them and for the Church.

We regret that the attorney, and therefore the people he represents, has thus far not agreed to participate in our process. Since we have been unable to learn any specifics about the allegations, we have no way of determining if they could be true. We are unwilling to settle any litigated cases without the use of the Allegation Review Board.

It is our view that litigation is not necessary. We need dialogue to resolve the issue. The attorney was informed of that, but he has chosen to sue us in court. We continue to offer our current process. However, we do not intend to make settlements simply to avoid litigation.