

## LOCAL AUDIT

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policies. Nationwide results of the study are expected to be announced in late February.

### LOCAL DATA

The diocese reported for the John Jay study that it had paid out \$1.24 million since 1950 for treatment, compensation or payment to victims of sexual abuse, and expended \$270,000 in related legal fees. Approximately \$831,000 was covered by private insurance policies and the balance by self-insurance. No monies raised from the ongoing Partners in Faith capital campaign have been used for these expenses.

A total of 114 allegations involving 36 diocesan priests had been received over the past 53 years. Diocesan officials noted that two-thirds of these allegations were received in the year 2002 amid intense media coverage and public awareness about the sexual-abuse crisis in the church.

Outcomes of the allegations were as follows:

- Eighteen priests either resigned or were removed from ministry due to allegations. None of these priests is currently ministering in Rochester or any other diocese. Michael Tedesco, diocesan spokesman, acknowledged that all 18 diocesan priests who resigned or were removed have been named publicly at one time or another. Noting that the John Jay study "asked for statistics only and not names," he said the diocese opted not to release a comprehensive list of the 18 priests because "we would first be obligated to contact the victims, and we didn't want to drag them through all this again."

- Six priests were deceased by the time allegations against them were received, making it impossible to assess the credibility of the charges.

- Allegations against six priests were determined to be unfounded.

- Allegations against the remaining six priests could not be substantiated through the evidence that was available.

Tedesco said these statistics do not include extern priests, priests who belong to religious orders or deacons who have served in the Diocese of Rochester. He said the diocese compiled statistics about diocesan priests only, since they were the focus of the John Jay study.

Tedesco also said there are cur-



Reuters/CNS

**Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, makes a point at a June 19, 2003, press conference in St. Louis, as Kathleen McChesney, director of the bishops' Office for Child and Youth Protection, and Bishop Joseph A. Galante, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Communications, listen. At their annual spring meeting, the bishops discussed their continuing efforts to deal with clergy sexual abuse.**

rently no allegations being investigated that would affect the statistics issued Jan. 6.

In regard to the number of Rochester diocesan priests involved in sexual-abuse cases, Tedesco said that "our numbers are pretty conservative in line with those of similar-sized dioceses." For instance, John Jay findings released Jan. 4 by Syracuse Bishop James M. Moynihan revealed that 96 complaints had been filed against 49 priests during the last half-century. Sixteen of those priests were removed in the last two years, and 13 are still under investigation. In December, Albany Bishop Howard J. Hubbard announced that 121 complaints of sexual abuse had been received against 53 diocesan clergy since 1950, with the Albany Diocese finding reasonable cause to believe allegations against 18 of the 53. None of those priests are currently in ministry, and the diocese is still investigating 15 current and former clergy.

### STRONG MEASURES TAKEN

According to the audit conducted locally in September, the diocese is doing a good job in implementing measures to prevent future incidences of sexual abuse — either by clerics or the laity.

Two representatives from the

Gavin Group — a former FBI agent and a former Illinois state trooper — headed up the diocesan audit by reviewing records and policies, and conducting several interviews with diocesan officials. The auditors checked for compliance in such areas as healing and reconciliation for sexual-abuse victims and survivors; swift response to allegations; cooperation with civil authorities; disciplining offenders; and providing means of accountability for the future.

Diocesan officials said the auditors did request some minor revisions in diocesan procedures: revising and distributing a pamphlet on procedures for filing a complaint; updating priest personnel policies to be consistent with the U.S. bishops' charter; and providing an implementation plan for training pertaining to parents and children.

Many of the in-compliance policies and procedures were in place long before the audit. For example, a review board, comprising diocesan officials as well as law enforcement and experts on sexual abuse was established in 1993. The board is currently chaired by former Monroe County Sheriff Andrew Meloni. Also in 1993, the diocese began requiring sexual-misconduct workshops for diocesan employees and ap-

pointed two victims' advocates.

More recently, in compliance with the USCCB charter, Bishop Clark unveiled a local Code of Pastoral Conduct in May 2003. The code requires additional training for diocesan and parish employees and volunteers, as well as criminal background checks for all such workers.

Bishop Clark told the *Courier* that in recent years, improved psychological screening and awareness of sexual-abuse patterns have helped weed out potential abusers before ordination to priesthood. In fact, diocesan officials reported that no priest ordained after 1980 has been the subject of a complaint related to sexual abuse.

That year, Bishop Clark recalled, began an era in which "abuse of children was getting a lot more attention across the board." Previously, he noted, sexual abuse "had been veiled over in the church and veiled over in society at large. There was denial, shame." The bishop said that he, also, was just beginning to learn more about the tendencies of abusers and how "this can be an incurable disposition in some people."

At that time, the bishop added, he was also becoming aware of the deep and lasting pain for victims of sexual abuse. To that end, he said, the diocese continues its strong commitment to victims and their families, such as the Nov. 22, 2003, day of reconciliation he led at Canandaigua's Notre Dame Retreat Center. The bishop also implored anyone who feels he or she may have been a victim of sexual abuse to contact the diocese.

Asked if the release of the John Jay report and audit results will help restore the public's trust in the Catholic Church, Bishop Clark replied, "My hope is that a step like this will be a moment of progress, perhaps a moment of increased confidence in what we're about." If his experiences at diocesan youth events over the past several months are any indication, the bishop feels that things are getting back on track.

"What I observe is a spirit of confidence and a spirit of joy," he said. "I hope that's a good sign."

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