



Decree of Promulgation

The **Policy Regarding Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct, and Sexual Harassment** updates the Diocese of Helena **Policy** which became effective on June 1, 1993, and results from the concern that the Church utilize competent ministers who provide effective ministry. We are convinced that the majority of those who serve in various capacities in the Diocese of Helena are competent, ethical, balanced, and mature. At the same time, we are aware that accusations have been made, and we are concerned that the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, with the accompanying *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, both revised in November 2005 with the *Norms* becoming effective May 5, 2006, are upheld and maintained in the Diocese of Helena.

While this Policy statement is necessarily canonical in tone, it reflects the compassion the Church has for victims of sexual abuse and provides abusers with hope for mercy. It is based on the conviction that behaviors that are contrary to the provisions of the Policy are objectively grave violations of the Sixth Commandment, potential crimes, and usually associated with serious psychological illness. Any response must address all three dimensions.

This Policy becomes effective on the sixteenth day of April 2007, nearly fourteen years after the first **Policy** became effective. It applies to all priests and deacons incardinated in the Diocese of Helena, all seminarians affiliated with the Diocese of Helena; to women and men religious, lay men and women, employed by or utilized as volunteers by the Diocese of Helena, its parishes, schools, institutions, offices, or programs; and to all priests and deacons incardinated in a diocese other than the Diocese of Helena serving in any capacity here, and to women and men religious serving in any capacity within the Diocese of Helena.

Should a complaint be received after the date of this letter and prior to April 16, 2007, the procedures outlined in the Policy will be followed.

In virtue of my authority as Bishop of the Diocese of Helena, this **Policy Regarding Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct, and Sexual Harassment** is hereby promulgated by sending a copy to each priest, deacon, seminarian, woman and man religious currently serving in the Diocese of Helena; by sending a copy to each parish and institution of the Diocese; and by publication of the Policy on the diocesan web site. A summary version is being prepared for distribution to each employee and volunteer

Given at Helena, Montana, this second day of March 2007; to take effect on the sixteenth day of April, 2007.

Signed by: Most Reverend George Leo Thomas, Bishop of Helena

Witnessed by: Reverend John W. Robertson, Chancellor