



Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
Archbishop of Denver

Addresses

A Letter from Archbishop Chaput: Addressing Allegations of Sexual Abuse

August 1, 2005

Dear friends in Christ,

As the people of our local Church reflect on a July 26 Denver Post news story (please see my July 26 comments on the story below) and subsequent follow-up allegations of sexual abuse by a former priest of the archdiocese, it may be helpful to review our recent archdiocesan history.

When Cardinal J. Francis Stafford became archbishop of Denver in 1986, American culture — including the medical profession and law enforcement authorities — was undergoing a major shift in understanding the nature, causes, scope and treatment of sexual abuse. Cardinal Stafford understood that the Church, like any other public entity, is not immune to sexual misconduct problems. He began the work of examining the national evidence and reviewing archdiocesan policies. He also sought the help of experts in creating procedures that would both serve the safety of people in our local Church, and respect every person's rights.

Elements of an overall Archdiocese of Denver sexual misconduct policy for both lay employees and clergy were in place as early as 1988. Archbishop Stafford finalized and promulgated these in 1991. Over the next several years, lay employees and clergy incorporated the policy throughout archdiocesan life. In his decade of service in Denver, Cardinal Stafford consistently worked to create a Church environment free of sexual misconduct, especially any abuse of minors.

In 2003, in light of the Dallas Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, our archdiocesan sexual misconduct policy was adjusted and further strengthened. We should remember that most of the Dallas Charter's provisions had already been put into force years earlier by Cardinal Stafford.

As I have stressed many times in the past, and will continue to stress in the future, the Archdiocese of Denver will not tolerate sexual misconduct by any member of its clergy or lay staff. We observe the law and report any allegation of sexual abuse of a minor to law enforcement authorities. We deeply regret the suffering of any victims of sexual abuse and their families. Ms. Nancy Walla (303-715-3226), special adviser to the archbishop on these important matters, is always available to respond promptly and sensitively to any allegation of sexual abuse of a minor and to provide appropriate assistance.

Now and always, thank you for your love for the Church.

*+Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
Archbishop of Denver*