



**A Letter from Archbishop Chaput:  
“How the Archdiocese of Denver addresses allegations of sexual abuse”**

July 26, 2005

Dear friends in the Lord,

Over the past 17 years, as society's understanding of sexual abuse has deepened, laypeople and clergy of the Archdiocese of Denver have worked hard to maintain a Church environment free of sexual misconduct, especially with minors. Throughout those efforts, we've always understood that we do not and cannot control events of the past. At the same time, we can and do respond to any allegation of child sexual abuse — including those from decades ago — promptly, seriously and pastorally as we receive them. This we have done, and this will continue.

The story in today's [July 26] Denver Post is painful but not unexpected. The victim in question contacted us earlier this year with allegations of sexual abuse as a minor 30 years ago by a former priest of the archdiocese. We reported the matter to law enforcement authorities, as we would with any such allegation. While it is inappropriate to discuss the details of any specific case, we do immediately invite any victim who comes forward to share his or her experiences with our archdiocesan Conduct Response Team. That team — which has a lay majority and includes a former state judge, a licensed psychologist, two licensed counselors and the archdiocese's vicar for clergy — has the task of listening carefully to the experiences of victims and recommending to me the best course of assistance. We do not, and will not, interfere with anyone's choice to seek media attention for any allegation.

We approach any allegation of this nature with these guiding principles:

1. We take every claim of sexual misconduct, and especially sexual abuse of a minor, seriously — and we address it promptly;
2. We report all claims of sexual abuse of a minor to the appropriate law enforcement authorities;
3. We offer counseling in any case where it will be helpful, including some cases where the claim seems unfounded;
4. We follow our policies (see links here) and the requirements of the national Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People consistently;
5. We respect the rights of the accuser, the accused and other persons who might be collaterally affected by an allegation;
6. We never resolve these issues in the media.

These principles will not change. As I've said in the past: We do not have, and will not tolerate, any priest in active ministry in the Archdiocese of Denver who has a credible claim of

child sexual misconduct against him.

The men who serve Catholics of northern Colorado as priests have gratitude for, and take pride in, their vocation. The support they enjoy from their people is a blessing for the whole Church. We will continue to work to deepen that bond by doing everything we can to protect our children and families from any form of sexual misconduct in a Church-related environment.

In the meantime we will respond to anyone else who makes an allegation — as well as anyone who is accused — with a spirit of justice, prudence and healing.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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