



Office of the Bishop  
*Diocese of Camden*

June 5, 2013

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

The abuse of a child is not only atrociously sinful but it is also a terrible betrayal of innocence and trust.

The Diocese of Camden has been vigilant in protecting the children entrusted to our care, and that vigilance has been enhanced by our maintenance of a toll-free number to report abuse, as well as the provision of law enforcement contact information on our website.

Our own internal efforts have two principal components:

- Our child abuse prevention program is intended to educate children to avoid and report abusive situations, and to train adults to recognize and deal with such situations, and
- Our criminal history background check program is intended to prevent anyone who would harm our children from having access to them.

Along with education and prevention our counseling outreach program – which is overseen by a Clinical Advisory Panel – has a long history of being professionally adept at helping those who have been victimized. I, of course, am ready to meet with victims of abuse in order to apologize to them and offer such guidance and support as I am able to provide.

Education, prevention and healing must be our watchwords as we confront and work to cure this stigma from our past, and assure that it never becomes part of our present or our future.

The *Standards for the Protection of Children and Young People* of the Diocese of Camden date back over ten years, and over that time experience has been gained in implementing them effectively. The Diocesan Review Board recently completed a comprehensive review of the *Standards* – which review was initiated by my predecessor, Bishop Joseph Galante – to assure that they remain current and appropriate. We should be grateful to Bishop Galante for having begun this process, and to the members of the Diocesan Review Board for having carried out this assignment with such dedication and thoroughness.

The Diocesan Review Board has suggested various modifications of – and notations to – the *Standards*, all of which recommendations I accept in their entirety. These revised *Standards for the Protection of Children and Young People* incorporate the modifications and notations recommended by the Board.

It is also to be noted that, in 2011, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops expanded the scope of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* to provide that a person who “habitually lacks the use of reason” is to be considered a minor for the purpose of sexual abuse. In accord with the recommendation of the Diocesan Review Board, I direct that any references to “children,” “minors” or the like in these *Standards* are to be read to include adults who are incapacitated or impaired by mental illness, or by chronic substance abuse or other difficulty to the point that they lack sufficient capacity to govern themselves or manage their affairs. I ask that if we are to err in this regard we would err on the side of caution in providing the fullest protection possible to the vulnerable members of our society.

We must pray that the scourge of abuse by those in the Church remains a thing of the past, and that we have the foresight and courage to be ever-vigilant in protecting those entrusted to our care.

With prayerful good wishes, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis J. Sullivan". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Most Reverend Dennis J. Sullivan, D.D.  
Bishop of Camden

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013