

CARDINAL MAIDA REMARKS
JOHN JAY STUDY | NATIONAL REVIEW BOARD REPORT
SACRED HEART MAJOR SEMINARY
FRIDAY, 27th FEBRUARY 2004

What we have here is a terrible chapter of Church history that we all wish never happened. But it is *our* history. We own it. We must face it, no matter how painful and move forward. If there were a way to turn the clock back, to stop the incidents of abuse before they happened, to better handle the situations once they developed, or to improve on our response to victims, we would do that. Instantly! But, of course, we can't. So, as we gather here today, we realize our future is before us, not behind us. We will learn from our history, not repeat it. And, we must move forward.

We do so with two important groundbreaking documents in hand.

The John Jay Study gives us the “nature and scope” of sexual abuse by members of the Catholic clergy in the United States from 1950 through 2002. The quality and quantity of the research contained in the study will, indeed, make it easier for us to face the future, here in the Detroit archdiocese, and beyond. As Bishop Wilton Gregory, president of the U-S Conference of Catholic Bishops said in Washington just a few hours ago, the *John Jay Study*, and these are his words, “adds to a tragic story, often told in broad strokes—the details that help us understand this problem more fully and to make sure that we have taken the steps to deal with it decisively.”

The National Review Board Report goes a step further exploring the “causes and context” of the crisis that has beset the Catholic Church in the United States. It, too, will be an invaluable resource that my brother bishops and I will use as we renew our commitment to assist victims and their families to create safe environments and to do all we can to protect children and young people. I want to take this opportunity to personally thank the members of the National Review Board; those dedicated Catholic lay people who accepted the difficult challenge to grapple with this problem and did so sincerely and constructively.

As helpful as these two reports are, it's possible to get so caught up in the statistics and charts contained within them to overlook or minimize the human component of what's involved here. Let me repeat something I said when we gathered here 3-weeks ago: the overwhelming majority of our Detroit priests have served and are serving faithfully and observing their commitment to celibacy. They are providing dedicated service to the people of the archdiocese. On the other hand, any single case of sexual abuse is one too many. The lives of victims can often be severely altered by sexual abuse. For some, their faith has been challenged beyond recovery. Once again, I offer my apologies to those who have been victimized and for our failures to address this matter appropriately. And, I invite those with complaints to come forward to call our toll-free line or to write us so that we may provide assistance where appropriate.

—more—

Just about two years ago, I was in Rome with the cardinals from United States for special meetings on this very same issue. We met with Vatican officials and we spent time with the Holy Father himself. Something he said to us then has been a great source of hope and inspiration to me in dealing with these matters: "So much pain, so much sorrow," the Holy Father said, "must lead to a holier priesthood, a holier episcopate, and a holier Church."

When I reflect on those words, I realize that, with trust in Almighty God, we are the authors of our future history. I know what we have learned from our past... and I approach our tomorrows with great determination and, at the same time, in a spirit of renewal and reconciliation. No matter how challenging, our compass is steady, our commitment is firm: The Archdiocese of Detroit will live by our "Promise to Protect" our "Pledge to Heal."

###