

# Diocese continues to move forward in response to sexual misconduct in the church

by Rev. Douglas L. Grams

Each Diocese in the nation, in compliance with the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth, has been developing and updating policies and programs to help prevent the abuse of children by clergy. If anyone has been harmed, procedures are in place to report abuse, remove the cleric from ministry if required and offer pastoral assistance to help the survivors and their families heal from this terrible crime.

## **Sexual Misconduct Policy:**

A revised Sexual Misconduct Policy for the Diocese of New Ulm as well as a procedural handbook is now in place following eight months of work by a drafting committee comprised of members of the Diocesan Staff. The revised policy, posted on the Diocese's web site [www.dnu.org](http://www.dnu.org), replaces the sexual misconduct policy that had been in effect since 1990. Also in place is a Criminal Background Check Policy and a Safe Environment Policy and Program.

## **Safe Environment Programs:**

Father Roman Paur, OSB, Director of Faith Community Learning Resource, Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN, will be conducting a safe environment workshop for all pastoral administrators and parish and diocesan staff on September 30, 2003 at Redwood Falls. The program will help participants to prevent and identify child sexual abuse.

On October 20, 2003, Father Paur will conduct this same safe environment presentation for all Catholic educators in the Diocese of New Ulm as well as Directors of Religious Education and volunteer catechists.

## **Code of Conduct:**

The Diocese has in place a Code of Conduct for all priests, permanent deacons and pastoral administrators. During the month of August, priests, deacons and pastoral administrators met at three different sites for an overview of the revised Sexual Misconduct Policy, the procedural handbook, the Code of Conduct, the Safe Environment Program and the Criminal Background Check process which should be completed by the end of September. Criminal Background Checks on all parish employees should be completed by September as well. All volunteers who work with youth on a consistent basis will also be asked to submit their names for analysis with the National Registry of Sex Offenders.

## **Advocate Training:**

In early October, four lay candidates will be taking part in a training program in St. Paul to become advocates in the four quadrants of the Diocese: Willmar, Marshall, Hutchinson, and New

Ulm. These advocates, literally helpers, will be available to assist victims of clergy sexual misconduct.

Further information in regard to sexual misconduct by clergy can be found at the diocesan web site [www.dnu.org](http://www.dnu.org). To obtain copies of any of the documents mentioned, please contact the Diocesan Pastoral Center, 1400 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; (507) 359-2966;

e-mail: [dnu@dnu.org](mailto:dnu@dnu.org).