

OFFICE OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

Victim Assistance

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is interested in healing and reconciliation with the Victims/Survivors of Sexual Abuse. The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People establishes their directives for promoting this healing in Article 2 of the Charter itself "*...Dioceses are to have a competent person or persons to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who report having been sexually abused as minors...*"

The Diocese of Charleston has policies and procedures in place for effectively dealing with the disclosure of sexual victimization. One of the most crucial aspects of our response to an allegation is the involvement of the Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC). This pivotal position must be held by a competent, trained, licensed professional whose mandate is to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of the person victimized, within a setting of compassion, acceptance, privacy and respect. The main focus of the VAC is primarily the emotional and spiritual well-being and healing of those who as minors have been affected by the sexually abusive conduct of any priest, deacon, religious or lay person of the Diocese of Charleston.

Louisa Storen is a licensed marriage and family therapist and a licensed independent social worker. She has been in private practice in the Lowcountry area since 1984. She received a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's in social work from the University of South Carolina. Ms. Storen served as Victim Assistance Minister from 2002 - 2005 and returned, after a brief time, in 2006. Ms. Storen brings to the position her solid reputation in the community, her integrity and her commitment to providing compassionate care and support to those needing her services.

The Diocese of Charleston is committed to respect for the dignity of each human person. Acts of sexual exploitation or abuse, particularly against the children or the vulnerable, will not be tolerated. If you suspect sexual abuse

has occurred within a family unit **contact the Dept. of Social Services. If you suspect abuse has occurred outside of the family, please contact the police of the county in which abuse may have occurred.**

Everyone is encouraged, whether the abuse took place in the past or in the present, to report this abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency as well as the Diocesan Office of Child Protection Services.

For confidential access to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, please call:

843-856-0748 (or) 800-921-8122.

You may also report abuse to Fr. Titus Fulcher, Director of The Office of Child Protection Services, at 843-853-2130, ext 209

Pledge to Heal

...individuals

- individual spiritual direction under the guidance of approved, trained spiritual directors.
- individual counseling, on a time limited basis, that provides therapeutic support to complement other efforts toward healing and wholeness.

Professional Resource Identification: assistance in one's search for other professional resources that one's individual circumstances require in their journey to wholeness.

...parishes and parish staffs

To help bring spiritual and emotional healing to the parish family, the Victim Assistance Minister offers assistance, consultation and support to parish pastoral staffs and provides parish intervention. A Parish intervention teams composed of trained personnel, psychologists and other professionals are available to assist parish communities affected by an allegation or incident of abuse.