

Put Out Into the Deep

## Toll-Free Number to Report Sexual Abuse



Bishop DiMarzio

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As an additional means of responding to the United States Bishops' 2002 "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" and its accompanying Norms, the Diocese of Brooklyn maintains a Toll-Free "888" Number for reporting instances of sexual abuse of minors by clergy and any other employees of the Diocese, and its parishes and institutions. The Toll-Free Number is (888) 634-4499.

The institution of the reporting Toll-Free "888" Number is an important part of our response to the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." In the past, reporting of such cases was made directly to the Chancery Office. Now, an attorney who is not involved in defending the Diocese receives the call.

It has been my experience that outside reporting systematizes and accelerates the process of following up on the reports. Another advantage of the outside reporting is that false reports are less likely when the person making the call realizes that he or she is not dealing directly with the Church entity but rather with others.

The Diocese of Brooklyn has an agreement to report to one or the other District Attorney of Kings and Queens Counties any allegations of abuse it receives, either past the statute of limitations or not. Reporting a crime to an attorney, in my estimation, is the best way to get accurate details that can be transmitted to the appropriate civil jurisdiction for

follow up. The attorney also immediately informs our Victim/Survivor Assistance Coordinator, Sister Ellen Patricia Finn, O.P., as well as myself for follow-up action.

The "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" states that an investigation must follow any reports of abuse, after which a priest may be relieved of his ministerial duties. It is always possible that, when there is a report of recent abuse and there is a clear danger to children, a priest might be removed before the completion or initiation of an investigation.

Unfortunately, the attorney who has volunteered to assist the Diocese in this reporting mechanism has come under, I believe, undue scrutiny by the press. It was my instruction that "an attorney beyond reproach" be found to assist the Diocese in this very important matter. Unfortunately, we are all open to criticism and reproach these days. Time will tell how the Diocese and those who are victims can best be served. Again, the intention is to separate those who receive reports and those who must act on such reports, so that there can be no filtering or miscommunication in this important protective activity.

In a recent communication to pastors and associates, I made them aware of a poster, to be placed in the vestibules of all churches in Brooklyn and Queens, that clearly states the Toll-Free Number for the Diocese of Brooklyn.

Last February, the U.S. bishops' National Review Board published the data gathered in the so-called

"John Jay Study," which covered reported abuse by clergy since 1950. Most of the abuse cases were more than a decade old. Nevertheless, constant vigilance is called for, in order to prevent the abuse of minors by anyone working for the Church.

This chapter in the history of the Church is a sad one, since it involved pain and suffering for innocent victims, as well as the cloud that has been cast upon all of the bishops and clergy by the actions of a few. It is, indeed, incumbent on the whole Church to work together to continually improve our protection activities. For example, the Diocese has invested much in the Virtus Safe Environment Program, which trains those working with youth to learn preventive and protection methods which can serve to avoid any kind of abuse of children.

We also must not forget that sexual abuse of minors is not a "Catholic (Church) problem" alone. Numerous times we are made aware of painful incidents perpetrated by other trusted members in every strata of society, including parents, teachers and other professionals. It is my hope that, as we learn more about this abhorrent behavior, we can all work together, taking pro-active steps, to eradicate this evil from our midst.

It is truly necessary that we put out into the deep and discover the new causes of abuse to make sure that we do all in our power to prevent any such abuse of minors in the future. Please join me in praying for purification of our Church and the restoration of faith and trust in those who serve the Church in the ministry of Word and Sacrament.



## Bishop Helps Celebrate Profession

THE TABLET, SEPTEMBER 11, 2004

The Little Sisters of the Poor recently welcomed three newly-professed sisters and three novices into their order. Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, shown above with the new sisters and novices, served as principal celebrant at a Mass of Religious Profession at St. Ann's Novitiate, Queens Village. A reception followed at Queen of Peace Residence. The three new sisters are Sister Martin Marie Tran, originally from Vietnam, who will serve the elderly in Indianapolis; Sister Mary Grace Bates, assigned to Louisville, KY; and Sister Christian Maria Arayata, a native of the Philippines heading for Latham, NY. In his homily, Bishop DiMarzio stressed the spousal relationship in consecrated life, emphasized by Pope John Paul II in his post-Synodal exhortation "On Consecrated Life." The bishop encouraged the newly-professed to cultivate a prayerful intimacy with the Lord as part of their service.



## Bishop DiMarzio's Calendar

Sunday to Thursday, Sept. 12-16 - Meeting of the Global Commission on International Migration, Cairo, Egypt.

Friday, Sept. 17 - 7 p.m., Deacon Anniversary Mass and dinner, Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston.

Saturday, Sept. 18 - 7:30 a.m., Mass, Helpers of God's Precious Infants, St. Joan of Arc Church, Jackson Heights.

- 10 a.m., Diocesan Pastoral Council Meeting, Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston.

- 3 p.m., Annual Mass and Investiture Ceremony, Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Eastern Lieutenancy of the United States, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Manhattan; 8 p.m., Dinner to follow at the Waldorf-Astoria.