

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FEBRUARY 27, 2004

**STATEMENT OF BISHOP JOHN B. McCORMACK
ON THE RELEASE OF THE JOHN JAY STUDY AND
THE NATIONAL REVIEW BOARD STUDY**

With the release of today's reports the entire Church is facing the truth about the devastating crime and sin of sexual abuse of children by clergy; and it is a hard truth. So, we do not fear this truth, we use it. With Our Lord's guidance, as the ultimate Truth, we will use the knowledge from these reports to build a better future for the Church.

These reports lift up the fact that people in the Church did not always do enough to respond effectively to victims. For myself, my brother bishops, and the Church I say to anyone who has been harmed by a priest or a representative of the Church, I am sorry.

In New Hampshire, we have been facing the depth of the crisis of sexual abuse of minors by some priests. Over the last few years as I have personally met with victims of abuse and as the Church has responded to their hurt and pain, we learned that this crisis was far greater than we thought and that the affect on victims lasts decades. As we extended ourselves to offer whatever assistance we could, we realized that the true healing will come through Our Lord.

As painful as it is to see the accumulated record of 52 years of abuse presented in one report, we also have to put into perspective that the vast majority of our priests have been and are dedicated servants, and enjoy the love and respect of the faithful. We will not excuse or forget the actions of some priests who abused the trust placed in them and violated both God's commandments and man's law. We will use what we have learned to make sure the Church does everything it can to protect children and respond decisively to any future reports of such abuse. To do anything less would be a dishonor to those men and women who have come forward with their personal and painful stories.

In New Hampshire we are blessed with laity who are both dedicated and full of love for the Church. With their assistance, we have reviewed and revised the way we respond to victims and have instituted safeguards to prevent abuse. Through the input of a Diocesan Review Board, individuals, in addition to the Bishop and his assistants, evaluate any complaint and make recommendations for action. Calling upon professional expertise of lay individuals we have established a support network to assist victims of sexual abuse. And, through their prayers and expressions of faith, we remain a Church strong enough to face the hard truth and committed enough to make the changes necessary to protect our children and all who turn to us.

As your bishop, I am responsible for the Church in New Hampshire, but I can only be effective with the help of all priests, men and women religious, and lay members. Together we face these hard truths and together we will move forward with confidence in Our Lord and one another.

Christ in all things.