



Bishop Britt's Letter to Parishioners About The John Jay Study

February 21, 2004

My Dear Friends,

Together, we witnessed the depth of human frailty as the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church unfolded over the past three years. Next week, we will take a very difficult look at the scope of this tragedy when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) National Review Board releases the results of the *John Jay Study*. This unprecedented self study was requested by the U.S. bishops at their national meeting in June 2002

This study, which will be openly shared with the media, was conducted by City University's John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. The study will share the total national number of cases and victims from the past 52 years. It does not break down numbers by individual diocese. The goal of the study is to provide the Church with a "*descriptive understanding...of the nature and scope of the problem including statistics*" on perpetrators and victims.

Recently, I shared with the media that over the past 52 years, eight of our local 625 priests had 35 substantiated cases of sexual abuse of minors. Also, I noted that \$1.2 million was spent to provide victim support, counseling and some settlement fees in earlier years. During that same period, \$253,000 was spent on legal fees. Please know NONE of these dollars came from the Catholic Services Appeal.

I am hopeful that the information gathered for this study will assist professionals with a better understanding of sexual abuse involving minors. Ultimately our goal is to benefit all of society so we may prevent such tragedies in the future. Be assured that we are actively working to create a safe environment for children and young people. The diocesan background check procedure has been expanded. Parish, school, volunteers, agency personnel and clergy are participating in the "Protecting God's Children Program" that is designed to raise awareness about sexual abuse of minors.

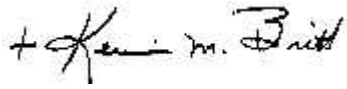
While the tragedy that occurred within our beloved Church cannot be undone, I am resolved to do whatever is necessary to end sexual abuse of children.

On behalf of the diocese, I apologize for the crimes of sexual abuse of minors that has occurred in the past. I extend heartfelt apologies to the victims and to their families for any failures in addressing this matter. If someone has been the victim of sexual abuse by a cleric, I invite you to come forward and contact our diocese line at 616-243-0491 so that we may provide immediate assistance.

I am inspired by the faith and faithfulness of the diocesan Catholic family. Though disheartened

by the tragedy, you remain true to God' s Church and open to His healing graces. Your continued support and input will be invaluable as we create a safe environment for all children.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Britt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Kevin M. Britt
Bishop of Grand Rapids