



Victim Assistance

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IF YOU HAVE BEEN ABUSED BY A PRIEST, OR OTHER CHURCH PERSONNEL, PLEASE CONTACT LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS IN THE AREA WHERE THE ABUSE OCCURRED. YOU SHOULD ALSO CONTACT THE DIOCESE'S VICTIM ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR, LOUISA STOREN, TO REQUEST ACCESS TO PASTORAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING A COUNSELING REFERRAL WHEN APPROPRIATE:

843-856-0748 OR 800-921-8122.

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 where the abuse occurred as well as the Diocesan Office of Office of Child and Youth Protection.

For confidential access to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, please call: 843-856-0748 or 800-921-8122.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops seeks 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: "... *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 referrals and 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.

Our Victim Assistance Coordinator is Louisa Storen, 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 holds 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 referrals for compassionate care and support to those needing her services.

Our 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. 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.

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“Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts, heal your people's wounds and transform our brokenness.

**Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice and find peace in you.”**

– Prayer for Healing

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