

**RESPONSE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA  
TO THE REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATING GRAND JURY  
SUBMITTED TO THE COURT AUGUST 31, 2005**

*Executive Summary*

The problem of sexual abuse of young people is a societal evil. Such abuse is a crime committed against some of the most vulnerable members of our society. The sexual abuse of a minor by anyone is an atrocious violation of a young person. That such abuse would be committed by a priest is even more despicable.

The Archdiocese acknowledges the aberrant behavior of certain of its priests and expresses to the victims of sexual abuse by priests, locally and elsewhere, its deepest apologies and prayerful sorrow. It must be remembered, however, that the priests responsible for this dreadful conduct represent only a small fraction of the thousands of priests, religious and laypersons who have dedicated their lives to the faithful of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia over the past 200 years.

Because the Archdiocese is concerned with this grave problem, it offered its full cooperation to the District Attorney's Office. Despite this expressed willingness, the grand jury was convened. For the next three and a half years, the Archdiocese continued to cooperate fully.

The grand jury report is misleading in its portrayal of the attitude of the Archdiocese toward sexual abuse of minors. In fact, the report is a lop-sided piece produced after a 40-month discriminatory investigation of the Archdiocese. Rather than undertaking a constructive review of the manner in which religious, social and community organizations alike respond to allegations of child sexual abuse, the District Attorney has prepared a sensationalized presentation of events, most of which transpired years ago. The original intent behind the grand jury concept was to shield against abuses of power. In this case, the grand jury was used as a sword to attack the Church and build support for insidious pre-judgments.

By focusing only on salacious details and the Catholic Church, the District Attorney does a public disservice in creating the perception that sexual abuse of minors is a "Catholic clergy" problem, rather than a problem throughout all of society. Yet, the report mentions no other organizations – religious or otherwise – besides the Archdiocese despite the fact that the District Attorney promised such a full examination. There is no acknowledgment that this is a broad social issue deserving of the concern of the community at large – not just a Catholic issue. There is no recognition that this severe problem is no more prevalent in Catholic institutions than other religious and non-religious institutions.

Most disturbing, however, is the manner in which the District Attorney's Office makes outlandish accusations of a "cover-up" of sexual abuse by priests. Although the report does not formally indict a single person, it seeks to convict in the court of public opinion the Archdiocese, two Archbishops, various members of the Church hierarchy over the past fifty (50) years, and numerous other priests, religious, and lay persons of participating in an evil conspiracy to hide the sexual abuse of minors. As discussed in greater detail in the Response of the Archdiocese, these charges are mean-spirited and unfounded.

