

## **Statement for the US National Council, Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

### **Abuse allegations in the Santa Fe Diocese**

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul's Archdiocesan Council of Santa Fe was recently notified of allegations regarding sexual abuse by a volunteer of the Society that occurred nearly 50 years ago. The Council's leadership is working with the Archdiocese to understand and resolve the allegations in full cooperation with all authorities.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is today an independent lay Catholic organization. However at the time of these allegations, the Society's Santa Fe operations were co-mingled with those of the Archdiocese as parish ministries and insured under the Diocese.

Since its beginnings, the Society has always insisted that its volunteers (Vincentians) serve the needy in person and in pairs. It is part of the governing Rule of the Society. For the Society's home visits to provide emergency financial and other assistance, Vincentians are always to make these visits accompanied by another adult Vincentian. This is meant to protect everyone involved including both the people being served and the Vincentians themselves.

Vincentians are also strongly encouraged to participate in safety programs required by the local Arch/Diocese for its volunteers who will be in contact with youth, such as the Santa Fe Archdiocese's "Protect Our Youth" program. It is not readily known if similar programs were available at the time of the alleged misconduct.

Allegations of sexual abuse by members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are exceedingly rare. The requirements outlined above help to provide the Society's 98,000 current US Vincentians with the tools necessary to prevent such incidents. Last year the Society provided over 2.1 million personal contacts with people in poverty in the United States.