



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

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Statement to be read at Mass regarding the Markey Bill

We believe that this Monday, June 8, 2009, Assemblywoman Margaret Markey's bill that would lift the statute of limitations on abuse claims will be voted upon by the New York State Assembly.

On June 5, 2009, *Newsday* reported that Markey amended her bill so that it would apply to public as well as private entities. This amendment does not change the Diocese of Rockville Centre's firm opposition to any bill that suspends, on a retroactive basis, the applicability of the statute of limitations.

The Diocese's reasons for this opposition have been consistently articulated. Opening a "window" for the institution of time barred suits is unjust and unfair, would be financially devastating, and does nothing to protect a single child in New York State from abuse.

Statutes of limitations exist to protect the fair administration of justice. Their purpose is to ensure that plaintiffs bring their claims within a reasonable period of time so that defendants will have timely notice of such claims and a reasonable opportunity to defend themselves. Over time, memories fade, witnesses die, evidence disappears and the likelihood of fraudulent claims increases. Statutes of limitations reflect recognition of the need to give legal repose to human affairs; their modification is a dangerous practice for society as a whole.

Opening a window for the bringing of time barred abuse claims would have a severe negative impact on charitable ministries within the Diocese, diverting resources from pursuing the Church's mission to the defense of litigation, much of which would center around old claims, the defense of which will be made extremely difficult by the passage of time.

Since 2002, the Catholic Church has taken more steps to prevent the abuse of children than any other private organization. No one who has been credibly abused of harming a child is currently in active ministry and all Church employees and volunteers in every diocese must complete abuse awareness training if they are going to be in contact with children in any way. Equally as significant, the Diocese of Rockville Centre has provided, and continues to provide, for the care and treatment of victims of abuse.

We urge you to contact your New York State Assembly representative by Monday and urge them to vote "NO" on the Markey bill.