

## HEARING FROM THE PULPIT

### *Some points to make in a homily or in a pulpit announcement include:*

- ✚ In his own public ministry, Christ gave an example of care for children. The Church has imitated his example by dedicating much of her ministry to the care of young people and children through education, social services and youth activities.
  - ✚ The care of young people is among the Church's most important obligations. To cause them harm is a great betrayal.
  - ✚ Because some acting in the name of the Church—especially some ordained ministers—betrayed young people by sexually abusing them, in 1992, the bishops developed principles which contributed a great deal to preventing future abuse. Many dioceses had developed policies on sexual abuse by that time or were developing them. [This diocese's original policy was first adopted in YEAR.]
  - ✚ However due to the abuse that had taken place before that time and sometimes even since and because some bishops, in their past response, did not immediately bring that abuse to an end to prevent further harm, the bishops developed in the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,” which they adopted nearly a year and a half ago a much more comprehensive framework to put an end to child sexual abuse and to prevent it in the future to the extent humanly possible.
  - ✚ The articles in the Charter are divided into four main goals are:
    - **To Promote the Healing and Reconciliation with Victims/Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse of Minors**
    - **To Guarantee an Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors**
    - **To Ensure the Accountability of Our Procedures**
    - **To Protect the Faithful in the Future**
- ✚ The steps dioceses [our diocese is] taking to implement these goals are:
    - having a victim assistance coordinator;
    - setting up a Review Board whose members were chosen for their expertise in various fields to advise the bishop on the dioceses' overall sex abuse policy and with individual allegations;
    - permanently remove all offenders from ministry, if an appropriate investigation under canon law establishes that a person is an offender. The Charter also rules out transferring a cleric who has committed abuse to another diocese for an assignment in ministry;
    - instituting a safe environment program [describe diocesan program];
    - careful screening of candidates for holy orders; and
    - screening of diocesan personnel with regular contact with children.

### **On the national level:**

- ✚ The bishops established an Office for Child and Youth Protection headed by a former top official of the FBI—Kathleen McChesney—with another former FBI official—Sheila Horan—as her deputy. Their background is law enforcement, not Church ministry—and they are taking a fresh, independent and “no nonsense” look at the problem;
- ✚ An all lay National Review Board, which has the role of monitoring and assisting the Office.
- ✚ The Office is conducting an audit of each diocese to make sure that each one is following the Charter;
- ✚ The Bishops deeply regret past abuse and that they did not always deal with it effectively.
- ✚ In the Charter they have offered a comprehensive framework to respond to this terrible problem.
- ✚ They encourage all Catholics and the public to become familiar with the Charter.
- ✚ They invite us all to consider the ways in which we can contribute to the protection of children and young people.

- ✦ In the spirit of Christ’s reaching out to the children and flowing from the Charter’s commitment to outreach, we want to express our concern that all victims come forward, even if others have already identified their offender or he is no longer in ministry.
- ✦ This will enable the diocesan outreach to assist in healing all victims.
- ✦ If the supposed offender is still in ministry, the victim can do a great service by coming forward and thus helping to prevent possible future acts of abuse and help foster a safe environment.
- ✦ Let our prayer be that these terrible crimes and sins of sexual abuse not hinder future generations of children from coming to Christ and his Church.

*As a homily or announcement text:*

The Church has followed Christ’s example of care for children contained in the gospels by dedicating much of her ministry to the care of young people through education, social services, and youth activities. This ministry to young people and care for them are among the Church’s most important obligations. To cause them harm, instead, is a great betrayal.

Because some acting in the name of the Church—especially some ordained ministers—betrayed young people by sexually abusing them, in 1992, the bishops developed principles which contributed a great deal to preventing future abuse. Many dioceses had developed policies on sexual abuse by that time or were developing them. [Our diocese’s original policy was adopted in YEAR.]

However due to the abuse that had taken place in earlier years and sometimes even more recently and because some bishops, in their past response, did not bring that abuse to an end soon enough to prevent further harm, the bishops developed a much more comprehensive framework in the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People,” which the adopted nearly a year and a half ago to put an end to stop child sexual abuse and to prevent it in the future to the extent humanly possible.

**The Charter has 17 articles or statements of actions that are divided into four main goals:**

- ✦ **To Promote the Healing and Reconciliation with Victims/Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse of Minors**
- ✦ **To Guarantee an Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors**
- ✦ **To Ensure the Accountability of the Charter’s Procedures**
- ✦ **To Protect the Faithful in the Future**

Among the steps our diocese has taken to implement the Charter is employing a victim assistance coordinator. The diocese also set up a Review Board whose members were chosen for their expertise in various fields to advise the bishop on the diocese’s overall sex abuse policy and on individual allegations. We have procedures for carefully screening of candidates for holy orders and also diocesan personnel with regular contact with children. We have also established a safe environment program [briefly describe diocesan program].

The diocese is committed to permanently removing from ministry any priests or deacons, if an appropriate investigation under canon law establishes that they have sexually abused a child or young person. The Charter also rules out transferring a cleric who has committed abuse to another diocese for an assignment in ministry.

On the national level, the bishops established an Office for Child and Youth Protection headed by a former top official of the FBI—Kathleen McChesney—with another former FBI official—Sheila Horan—as her deputy. With their background is law enforcement, they are taking a fresh, independent, and “no nonsense” look at the problem. An all lay National Review Board is monitoring and assisting the Office. The Office is conducting an audit of each diocese to make sure that each is following the Charter. Its results will be released early next year.

The Bishops deeply regret past abuse and that they did not always deal with it effectively. But, in the Charter they have offered a comprehensive framework to respond to this terrible

problem. They encourage all Catholics and the general public to become familiar with the Charter. The bishops ask our help in living up to the Charter's goals, and they invite us all to consider the ways in which we can contribute to the protection of children and young people.

In the spirit of Christ's reaching out to the children and flowing from the Charter's commitment to outreach, we want to express our concern that all victims come forward, even if others have already identified their offender or he is no longer in ministry. This will enable the diocesan outreach to assist in healing all victims. In cases where the supposed offender is still in ministry, the victim can do a great service by coming forward so the individual can be investigated and removed from ministry, if the abuse is proven. Thus possible future acts are prevented and safe environments fostered.

Let us pray at our Eucharist today that these terrible crimes and sins of sexual abuse not hinder future generations of children from coming to Christ and his Church where so many have found and can continue to find joy and peace.

*Petitions for Prayers of the Faithful*

**The following petitions could be used on any Sundays of October–November:**

**The response is, Lord, hear our prayer.**

For our bishop(s) and all the bishops of the United States, that they may zealously and effectively put into effect their Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, let us pray to the Lord....

For all who have suffered sexual abuse as children or young people by clergy or by anyone else, may they experience healing and peace of spirit, let us pray to the Lord....

For our parishes, schools, athletic programs, and all organizations within our diocese that minister to children and young people that they may offer safe and secure environments for them, let us pray to the Lord....

For those in our diocese engaged in outreach to all victims of sexual abuse of minors by anyone acting in the name of the Church, may they bring them the compassionate love of Christ, let us pray to the Lord....

For the members of our diocesan review board, which advises the bishop in matters relating to sexual abuse by clergy, may they bring to their considerations wisdom and insight, let us pray to the Lord....

For law enforcement officials and other public authorities who have responsibility for the safety and welfare of children, that they may be vigilant in fulfilling their obligations, let us pray to the Lord....

For the bishops' national Office of Child and Youth Protection and the National Review Board, that they may be successful in their efforts to assist in the full implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, let us pray to the Lord....

For all our priests and deacons who serve God's people each day in fidelity to their vocations, let us pray to the Lord....