

SAMPLE DIOCESAN NEWSPAPER INSERT/BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

The purpose of these newspaper inserts/bulletin announcements is to call attention to the fact of the compliance audit and the elements of the Charter over a series of weeks.

WEEK ONE

To Promote Healing and Reconciliation with Victims/Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse of Minors

Dioceses throughout the country are participating in a compliance audit conducted by independent auditors. The audit will determine whether dioceses are implementing the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” which the bishops adopted last year. The Charter is a comprehensive framework for dealing with sexual abuse by clergy of children and youth. Below is a summary of the first section of the Charter:

Dioceses/Eparchies will

- * Develop an outreach to all victims of sexual abuse of minors by anyone acting in the name of the Church.
- * Through this outreach, listen with patience and compassion to their experiences.
- * Respond promptly to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred.
- * Have a competent person to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who claim to have been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel.
- * Have a review board that functions as a confidential consultative body to the bishop/eparch—a majority of whose members will be lay persons not in the employ of the diocese/eparchy—to advise the bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of suitability for ministry.
- * Not enter into confidentiality agreements except for grave reasons brought forward by the victim/survivor.

The complete Charter is available from [diocesan source] and can be found the Web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.usccb.org.

WEEK TWO

To Guarantee an Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors

Dioceses throughout the country are participating in a compliance audit conducted by independent auditors. The audit will determine whether dioceses are implementing the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” which the bishops adopted last year. The Charter is a comprehensive framework for dealing with sexual abuse by clergy of children and youth. Below is a summary of the second section of the Charter:

Dioceses/Eparchies will

- * Report an allegation of sexual abuse of a person who is a minor to the public authorities and cooperate with their investigation.
- * Cooperate with public authorities about reporting in cases when the person is no longer a minor.
- * Advise victims of their right to make a report to public authorities and support this right.
- * Permanently remove from ministry a priest or deacon if sexual abuse of a minor is admitted or is established, after an appropriate process in accord with canon law. Do everything possible to restore the cleric’s good name when the accusation has proved to be unfounded.
- * Have clear and well-publicized standards of ministerial behavior.
- * Develop a communications policy that reflects a commitment to transparency and openness.

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WEEK THREE

To Ensure the Accountability of Our Procedures

Dioceses throughout the country are participating in a compliance audit conducted by independent auditors. The audit will determine whether dioceses are implementing the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” which the bishops adopted last year. The Charter is a comprehensive framework for dealing with sexual abuse by clergy of children and youth. Below is a summary of the third section of the Charter:

The Bishops Approved

- ✦ An Office for Child and Youth Protection to assist dioceses/eparchies in implementing “safe environment” programs and to produce an annual public report on the progress made in implementing the Charter standards.
- ✦ A National Review Board to assist and monitor the Office and approve the annual report on the implementation of the Charter before the report is submitted to the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and published.
- ✦ Two studies to be commissioned by the National Review Board to help understand the problem of child sexual abuse by clergy more fully and to enhance the effectiveness of their response.
- ✦ A restructured Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse to include representation from all the episcopal regions into which the membership of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is divided.

In addition, the bishops asked their Conference president to inform the Holy See of the Charter to indicate the manner in which the bishops, together with the faithful in the United States, intend to address the crisis.

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WEEK FOUR

To Protect the Faithful in the Future

Dioceses throughout the country are participating in a compliance audit conducted by independent auditors. The audit will determine whether dioceses are implementing the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” which the bishops adopted last year. The Charter is a comprehensive framework for dealing with sexual abuse by clergy of children and youth. Below is a summary of the fourth section of the Charter:

Dioceses/Eparchies will

- ✦ Establish “safe environment” programs to provide education and training for youth and adults in ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children.
- ✦ Evaluate the background of diocesan and parish personnel with regular contact with minors, and employ adequate screening and evaluative techniques to decide fitness of candidates for ordination
- ✦ Not transfer any priest or deacon who has committed an act of sexual abuse of a minor for ministerial assignment in an another diocese.
- ✦ Before transferring a priest or deacon for residence elsewhere, provide the bishop or religious superior there with information about any act of sexual abuse of a minor or other information that the cleric may be a danger to children or young people.
- ✦ Meet periodically with superiors of religious communities to coordinate on allegations made against a cleric member of a religious institute ministering in a diocese/eparchy.

In addition, the bishops offered to cooperate with other churches, ecclesial communities, and organizations to conduct research about sexual abuse of minors, given the extent of the problem in society at large.

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WEEK FIVE

The Bishops' Expression of Sorrow and Apology

Dioceses throughout the country are participating in a compliance audit conducted by independent auditors. The audit will determine whether dioceses are implementing the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" which the bishops adopted last year. The Charter is a comprehensive framework for dealing with sexual abuse by clergy of children and youth. Below is an excerpt from the Charter's Preamble:

"The Church in the United States is experiencing a crisis without precedent in our times. The sexual abuse of children and young people by some priests and bishops, and the ways in which we bishops addressed these crimes and sins, have caused enormous pain, anger, and confusion. Innocent victims and their families have suffered terribly. In the past, secrecy has created an atmosphere that has inhibited the healing process and, in some cases, enabled sexually abusive behavior to be repeated. As bishops, we acknowledge our mistakes and our role in that suffering, and we apologize and take responsibility for too often failing victims and our people in the past. We also take responsibility for dealing with this problem strongly, consistently, and effectively in the future. From the depths of our hearts, we bishops express great sorrow and profound regret for what the Catholic people are enduring. ... The damage caused by sexual abuse of minors is devastating and long-lasting. We reach out to those who suffer, but especially to the victims of sexual abuse and their families. We apologize to them for the grave harm that has been inflicted upon them, and we offer them our help for the future. In the light of so much suffering, healing and reconciliation are beyond human capacity alone. Only God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness can lead us forward, trusting Christ's promise: 'for God all things are possible' (Mt 19:26)."

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WEEK SIX

The Bishops' Pledges

Dioceses throughout the country are participating in a compliance audit conducted by independent auditors. The audit will determine whether dioceses are implementing the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" which the bishops adopted last year. The Charter is a comprehensive framework for dealing with sexual abuse by clergy of children and youth. Below are the pledges that the bishops make in the conclusion of the Charter:

- ✠ We pledge most solemnly to one another and to you, God's people, that we will work to our utmost for the protection of children and youth.
- ✠ We pledge that we will devote to this goal the resources and personnel necessary to accomplish it.
- ✠ We pledge that we will do our best to ordain to the priesthood and put into positions of trust only those who share this commitment to protecting children and youth.
- ✠ We pledge that we will work toward healing and reconciliation for those sexually abused by clerics.
- ✠ We make these pledges with a humbling sense of our own limitations, relying on the help of God and the support of his faithful priests and people to work with us to fulfill them. Above all we believe, in the words of St. Paul as cited by Pope John Paul II in April 2002, that "where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more" (Rm 5:20). This is faith's message. With this faith, we are confident that we will not be conquered by evil but overcome evil with good (cf. Rm 12:21).

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