

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

COMMUNICATING THE CHARTER

Homily Notes/Draft Bulletin or Pulpit Announcement/Possible Petitions for the Prayer of the Faithful

The first set of Homily Notes below is intended to be used on the Feast of the Holy Family. However, since the notes are lengthy, they could constitute material for homilies on both the Holy Family and the Solemnity of the Epiphany. A second set of Homily Notes for the Epiphany is also supplied using points #17 to #25 from the Homily Notes for Feast of the Holy Family. Those points would therefore, be omitted from the homily on that Feast.

Since there are many homily guides which suggest points related to the theme and texts of the feasts themselves, these noted are restricted to information related directly to the sexual crisis with suggestions of ways to connect them to the feasts' themes.

There is also the text of a possible pulpit/bulletin announcement for use on both Sundays to alert parishioners to the release of the audit compliance report in Washington, DC on January 6, 2004.

Also included are some sample petitions for the Prayer of the Faithful.

December 27-28, 2003

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Reading I: 1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28 or Sir 3:2-6, 12-14

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10 or Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

Reading II: 1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24 or Col 3:12-21 or Col 3:12-17

Gospel: Lk 2:41-52 -- Jesus is missing and is found teaching in the Temple

Homily Notes:

- 1) Parents today can easily put themselves in the place of Mary and Joseph in this passage from St. Luke's gospel.
- 2) We hear so many stories of missing children, some of which end happily and some of which end tragically.
- 3) Just over 10 years ago, in October 2003, Polly Klaas was abducted from her home. Thousand of volunteers from the California town where she lived joined in a search for her. Sadly, she was found murdered.
- 4) The story of Elizabeth Smart, who was abducted in June 2002, had a happy ending when she was returned to her family alive.
- 5) The effect of these stories of tragedies or near tragedies befalling children can have extraordinary social consequences.
- 6) Megan's Law is named for the 7-year-old New Jersey girl assaulted and killed by a convicted sex offender in 1994. Passed in 1996 as an amendment to the Crimes Against Children's Act, Megan's Law requires each state in the country to notify the public when dangerous sexual offenders are residing in their area. All fifty states carry some form of public notification.
- 7) As the result of the abduction and murder of his six-year-old son, Adam, John Walsh turned his energy to the cause of missing and exploited children, working for the passage of 1982 Missing Children Act. He is also the creator the popular crime-fighting TV program, "America's Most Wanted."
- 8) As these examples show, parents today can sympathize with the anxiety of Mary and Joseph when they could not find the child Jesus in the caravan of their relatives and acquaintances.
- 9) Most parents have probably echoed at some time Mary's words to the newly found Jesus, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."
- 10) The Church has always seen the family as the basic building block of society. Support for the family has been among the Church's most constant concerns.

- 11) This support for the family is expressed in the Church's many ministries directed to the service of children: education, above all, but also youth services, youth athletics, social services and health care. With regard to education, the Church runs the largest network of private schools in the U.S. Over 2.6 million students are enrolled in its 7,142 elementary schools and 1,376 high schools.
- 12) Beyond the Catholic school system, our parishes put tremendous resources into the religious education of the children not in the Catholic school system.
- 13) When it comes to young people, the Church seeks to work in partnership with parents to assist them in the moral and religious education of their children and in whatever other ways the Church can be of assistance.
- 14) Sadly, in our times, the credibility of Church leadership in asserting its desire to be of assistance to parents in promoting the well-being of their children has been tarnished by the scandal of the sexual abuse of children and young people by some of clergy.
- 15) In the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," which the bishops adopted in June 2002, the bishops recognized the bonds of trust had been strained. They also recognized that to restore trust, they needed both God's help and also to work "in full collaboration with our people."
- 16) They also recognized that "words alone cannot accomplish" the goal of restoring trust, but that the task needed to begin "with the actions" which they took in their general meeting and "at home in our" (dioceses)(eparchies.) **[NB: If continuing this homily on the Solemnity of the Epiphany, indicate that you will discuss the steps that the bishops have taken next Sunday and skip to # 26.]**
- 17) The "Charter" includes both steps to address the problem of abuse and the means to make the bishops accountable for implementing these steps.
- 18) Independent observers—the National Review Board, a group of 12 distinguished Catholic laity, and an audit firm called the Gavin Group—have been asked to judge whether dioceses are taking the steps called for in the "Charter" and to make that judgment public.
- 19) A report on the compliance of (dioceses/eparchies) with the "Charter" will be released on January 6, 2004.
- 20) This report will also be a source of learning how to build on what dioceses are doing well and what more we need to do to protect children and young people.
- 21) Thus, the audit is not the end of the dioceses' efforts but a new beginning in which the whole Church needs to join to make our (dioceses/eparchies), parishes, and all our Catholic institutions "safe environments" for children and young people.
- 22) Since the compliance audit is based on dioceses' implementation of the "Charter" after it was adopted in June 2002, it might be good to re-call what the "Charter" contains.
- 23) The articles in the "Charter" 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 Our Procedures
 - To Protect the Faithful in the Future
- 24) Steps that (dioceses/eparchies) are taking [or Steps that our (diocese/eparchy) is taking] to implement these goals include:
 - 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 removing 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;
 - Screening of diocesan personnel with regular contact with children.
- 25) On the national level, the bishops have 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.
- 26) The Bishops deeply regret past abuse and that they did not always deal with it effectively.
- 27) In the “Charter” they have offered a comprehensive framework to respond to this terrible problem.
- 28) They invite us all to consider the ways in which we can contribute to the protection of children and young people.
- 29) They encourage all Catholics and the public to become familiar with the “Charter,” especially since that will aid greatly in understanding the report to be issued on January 6.
- 30) Let us return briefly to the image of Mary and Joseph anxiously searching for the young Jesus. This story ends happily. Some of these stories do not.
- 31) The Gospel tells us that Jesus went down with his parents and “came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.”
- 32) The Church seeks to stand with families in both the joy and sorrow.
- 33) Above all the Church wishes to assist families in safeguarding their children’s well-being and in the raising them so that they too may advance “in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.”

January 3-4, 2004
The Epiphany of the Lord

Reading I:

Is 60:1-6

Responsorial Psalm:

Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

Reading II:

Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6

Gospel:

Mt 2:1-12 – The Magi

Homily Notes:

- 1E)** The Epiphany celebrates Christ manifesting himself to the Gentiles—the millions of his time and billions more down the ages that were and are not of the Jewish nation.
- 2E)** St. Paul celebrates this revelation in the reading from the Ephesians where he writes of “the mystery” made known to him that “the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”
- 3E)** Thus the celebration of the Epiphany is suffused with the light of Christ shining on all of humanity, dispersing the darkness that “covers the earth, and thick clouds” that cover the peoples.
- 4E)** It is not too much to say that a cloud has been cast in the Church by the crisis of the sexual abuse of children and young people by some clergy.
- 5E)** Last week we talked about how important the family is to the Church and the bishops’ great regret that the Church’s credibility in support of the family should have been affected by this crisis.
- 6E)** Today, I would like to go into more detail about the steps adopted by the bishops in June of 2002 as part of their “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”—steps that will help shine a light on their commitment to overcoming this crisis.
- 7E)** The “Charter” includes both steps to address the problem of abuse and the means to make the bishops accountable for implementing these steps.
- 8E)** Independent observers—the National Review Board, a group of 12 distinguished Catholic laity, and an audit firm called the Gavin Group—have been asked to judge whether dioceses are taking the steps called for in the “Charter” and to make that judgment public.
- 9E)** A report on the compliance of (dioceses/eparchies) with the “Charter” will be released on January 6, 2004.

- 10E)** This report will also be a source of learning how to build on what dioceses are doing well and what more we need to do to protect children and young people.
- 11E)** Thus the audit is not the end of the dioceses' efforts but a new beginning in which the whole Church needs to join to make our (dioceses/eparchies), parishes, and all our Catholic institutions "safe environments" for children and young people.
- 12E)** Since the compliance audit is based on dioceses' implementation of the "Charter" after it was adopted in June 2002, it might be good to re-call what the "Charter" contains.
- 13E)** The articles in the "Charter" 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 Our Procedures
 - To Protect the Faithful in the Future
- 14E)** Steps that (dioceses/eparchies) are taking [or Steps that our (diocese/eparchy) is taking] to implement these goals include:
- 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 removing 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;
 - Screening of diocesan personnel with regular contact with children.
- 15E)** On the national level the bishops have 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.
- 16E)** The bishops encourage all Catholics and the public to become familiar with the "Charter" and so be ready for the release of the compliance audit report this Tuesday, January 6.
- 17E)** In the "Charter," the bishops state that their "obligation to protect children and young people and to prevent sexual abuse flows from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, in whose name we serve." May the light of Christ shining on us this Epiphany reveal the truth of this commitment and help heal all who have been harmed.

Sample Bulletin/Pulpit Announcement for Sundays December 28, 2003 and January 4, 2004

On Tuesday, January 6, a report will be released in Washington, DC, which indicates how well dioceses are implementing the steps adopted by the Catholic Bishops of the United States in June 2002, to address the problem of sexual of children and young people by some clergy. The Bishops' "**Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People**" provides a comprehensive framework to address allegations of abuse and to create safe environments for children and young people.

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 called for in the "Charter" are for dioceses to employ a victim assistance coordinator; set up a "review board" whose members are to advise the bishop on the diocese's overall sex abuse policy and on individual allegations; carefully screen candidates for Holy Orders; and other diocesan personnel with regular contact with children; and establish a safe environment program for children.

Nationally, 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 and an all lay National Review Board to monitor and assist the Office.

The Office conducted the compliance audit of dioceses whose results will be released (on Tuesday, January 6)/(this coming Tuesday).

The Bishops deeply regret past abuse and that they did not always deal with it effectively. But in the Charter they have offered the framework to respond to this terrible problem. They encourage all Catholics and the 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.

Sample Petitions for the Prayer of the Faithful

Sundays December 28, 2003 and January 4, 2004

For our bishops, that God may grant them the wisdom to discern what is right and the courage and strength to do it faithfully in leading the Church, let us pray to the Lord...

For all our faithful priests, that they draw strength and courage from the Lord, let us pray to the Lord...

For the victims of sexual abuse as children, that the healing power of God's love may help them to find solace and comfort in Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Lord...

For all who minister to those who were abused as children, that their compassionate care may reveal the love of Christ himself, let us pray to the Lord...

That the Church be permanently cleansed from the scourge of sexual abuse of minors by clergy and emerge with a heightened sense of compassion for those among us who have suffered, let us pray to the Lord...

That the steps taken by our diocese to prevent sexual abuse of minors by clergy from happening in the future may be effective, let us pray to the Lord...

That the steps taken by our diocese to reconcile those harmed as children by sexual abuse by clergy may be effective, let us pray to the Lord...

That each member of our community have the strength and resolve to act on any knowledge of sexual abuse of children and young people, let us pray to the Lord...