



Office of the President

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3100 • FAX 202-541-3166

Cardinal Francis George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago

Preface

Cardinal Francis George, OMI
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The 2008 Report on the Implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* details the accomplishments of the dioceses/eparchies and the challenges that remain. This report stands as evidence that the Church takes seriously its role in preventing child sexual abuse and reconciling with past victims.

The year 2008 marks the sixth year the bishops and eparchs have worked to implement the *Charter* in their dioceses/eparchies. In that *Charter*, we promised to protect the children in our care, promote healing and reconciliation with victims/survivors of sexual abuse, guarantee an effective response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors, and ensure accountability of our procedures.

Bishops across the country are reaching out to victims in an effort to heal their suffering and promote reconciliation. While bishops were doing this prior to Pope Benedict XVI's visit to our country, his example of courage, compassion, and kindness served to reinforce our efforts.

This Annual Report details the status of the audits that ensure accountability. The audit process helps us to integrate the safety of our children into the daily life and work of the Church. Progress continues.

The 2007-2008 audits marked the beginning of a new process. The audit year has been standardized from July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008, to make a better annual assessment of progress and to measure accountability more regularly. In addition, there is also now a combination of full onsite audits and data collection audits. For the most recent audit, for example, one-third of the dioceses and eparchies participated in the onsite audits, and two-thirds participated in data collection audits. The latter required the same level of record keeping as the onsite audits, and the information was reviewed by an auditor. Clearly the bishops and eparchs of the United States remain committed to our pledge of ensuring accountability.

In addition, to protect the faithful, a variety of child abuse prevention activities are being implemented within dioceses/eparchies. It is our hope that, following these tragic events, new ways are being found to improve not only the safety of children in the care of the Church, but also the safety of all children in society.

By our prayers, actions, and dedication to protect children, we are working to make the world safer for all young people. We and the Church are on the right path.