



Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection

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Cardinal Francis George, President
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Judge Michael R. Merz, Chair
National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People

Your Eminence and Chair Merz,

Following is the report on the sixth annual compliance audit, and there is good news.

Yes, good news.

The Catholic Church is taking practical steps to address the crisis to ensure it will never be repeated: steps for which all Catholics can be proud, although that information does not always get out. I want to make sure you, and all those who read this report, hear the good news too.

Clearly, we have faced horrible situations, but I believe that the Catholic Church has turned a corner on addressing sexual abuse of children. Is every diocese doing everything perfectly? No, we are not there yet, though we're far closer than we were last year and the year before that and all previous years. We're moving forward. A more detailed assessment per Article of the overall compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* can be found in the full report.

What the Catholic Church now does to protect children and reach out to victims can serve as a guide for others here in the United States and in other countries. Child abuse is a worldwide epidemic. The statistics reflect that one in five females and one in six males in the United States are sexually abused before the age of 18. This is a national epidemic that the Catholic Church is doing much to change.

Good news is a hard sell. Trust in the Catholic Church has suffered from the sexual abuse crisis. Restoration of that trust comes slowly. One step toward restoring confidence will be letting people know what the Church has done to keep children safe and reach out to victims.

As the audits progress from year to year, the Church is becoming one of the safest havens in our world for children and young people. The Church also is becoming a resource for people beyond the Catholic Church who seek to confront this societal scourge. The bishops can be proud of what they have accomplished and their ongoing commitment to address this issue. That's progress and that's good news.

Sincerely,

Teresa M. Kettelkamp
Executive Director