

[Remarks As Prepared for Delivery]

**Introduction of Action Item for *Charter* Revision**  
**Bishop Barry C. Knestout**  
**Chairman, Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People**  
**June 10, 2026**

Allow me to preface this Action Item with the following:

The efforts to review and provide revisions to the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* began with specific instructions from the body of bishops, the Committee on Priorities and Plans, and the Administrative Committee.

When the review began in Fall 2021, it was with the instruction that the Charter is not to deviate from its current focus on minors and clergy. The Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People received feedback from the body of bishops at least three times reiterating that the Committee was to keep the Charter focused exclusively on the abuse of minors by priests and deacons.

The Charter Revision Working Group was created with collaboration from the Committees on the Protection of Children and Young People, Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations, the Office of the General Counsel, the National Review Board, including consultants to the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People, and committee staff members.

As a result, other than the footnote references, the revised *Charter* before you does not address in detail, cases of sexual abuse involving adults or abuse perpetrated by others in Church service. These matters are more appropriately addressed in canonical processes and are outside of the scope of the Charter.

Please keep in mind, the Committee is expecting forthcoming documents issued by the Holy See, specifically the Universal Guidelines Framework being prepared by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, and canonical legislation on spiritual abuse, both of which may impact the *Charter*.

As some concerns were raised to us, Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, and the General Secretary, there was a call for clear guidance to assist bishops in implementing canonical penal processes, including the rights of the accused, and assisting penal tribunals in their application of the law.

The Administrative Committee agreed that the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations, will develop a new document separate from the Charter focusing on standards of professional behavior for both clergy and laity with adults, including vulnerable adults. Such a document would be developed in collaboration with the Committee on Laity, Marriage,

Family Life and Youth, and in consultation with the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People, the Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance, vicars for clergy, and human resource experts. It is my understanding, as well, that the Committee on Canonical Affairs and Church Governance will be addressing other identified items outside of the scope of the Charter that are canonical or procedural in nature.

If the revised text of the Charter is approved, it will be scheduled for review again in seven years. I want to be firm in stating that the CPCYP is cognizant of the realities that our brother bishops and their staffs, such as Victim Assistance and Safe Environment Coordinators, and review boards, are facing. In particular, adult-to-adult cases, but also the handling of allegations, and the interpretation and implementation of the Charter. The revised Charter before you will not respond to all of the needs in our dioceses and eparchies.

## **REVISIONS**

This proposed revised charter contains notable additions to the original, but maintains the intent and focus of the original charter to express the commitment of the bishops to address with transparency and accountability accusations of abuse committed by clergy.

The glossary is the newest addition to this revision. This is in response to repeated requests from dioceses on having more consistent definitions of various terms.

Among the influences drawn from the revisions of Book VI of the Code of Canon Law is the integration of the right of an accused to the presumption of innocence.

Among the *Vos estis lux mundi* (VELM) general provisions is the identification of mandatory Church reporters to complement mandatory reporting to civil authorities.

Additional revisions include – the clear allowance for electronic letters of suitability, and an added reference to the protection of information under the seal of the Sacrament of Penance.

The Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations reviewed the Statement on Episcopal Commitment and considers it best for it to remain as is for this revision.

Finally, I would note that none of the proposed modifications to the text of the Charter necessitate changes to the Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. Please recall that any changes to the Norms would entail a process of seeking approval from the Holy See.

At this time, I am open to questions for clarification about the revision.