



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

June 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Every year since 2002, I have reported to you on our Diocesan response to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This Charter, issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2002, established standards to be implemented in every Diocese in the United States. With guidelines in place, the Church diligently went about the task of insuring that our children would be safe from the dangers of physical and sexual abuse. This is a moral imperative which I as your Bishop take very seriously.

In the thirteen years since the sexual abuse scandal has come to light, the number of new allegations has dramatically declined. While this is good news, I want to assure you that I and all under the employ of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, including Clergy, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious and lay people, remain vigilant in keeping the Church an institution that is safe for our children and young people. We continue to take every allegation seriously and will always have available the Hot Line Number, 516-594-9063, where reports can be made. Established policies and procedures remain in place; for example, when an allegation is made we promptly initiate a report to the appropriate District Attorney. Simultaneously, the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People will reach out to the alleged victim, offer support and gather information. We remain firm in our commitment to uphold the standards we have in place.

The Diocese of Rockville Centre remains pro-active in its approach to child safety. We have the expectation and requirement that all employees and volunteers attend a Virtus Class. During the Virtus class, adults learn to recognize the signs of abuse and to intervene before a child is abused. To date 98,800 people have attended these training sessions. Classes are held throughout the year in various locations throughout the Diocese. Presently we have 298 trained Virtus Facilitators conducting sessions in our parishes, schools and agencies. Abuse prevention is taught in all Diocesan schools and Religious Education programs. Children are taught what abuse is, personal safety awareness and how to report abuse of any kind. Under the direction of Eileen Puglisi, the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People initiated a clergy awareness program entitled Critical Conversations. This program builds on the Virtus classes, offering more content on specific issues such as electronic communication.

In November 2014, the Diocese will undergo an Audit conducted by StoneBridge Business Partners. This on-site audit will assist us in determining our adherence to the standards established by the Charter. In the past, our Diocese has been found to be in full compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and I anticipate similar findings with this Audit.

Finally, my gratitude and best wishes to Ms. Eileen Puglisi on her retirement. Mary McMahon, LCSW, replaces Eileen as the Director for the Protection of Children and Young People. I remain confident that the good work begun by Eileen will continue under Mary's direction.

The Church has done much, but we must remain ever vigilant. Society has many temptations that run counter to the Gospel traditions. Our young people are vulnerable to a culture of materialism and instant gratification. Please pray with me for the safety of all our children, and for on-going healing and peace for all those who have suffered. May God bless you.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

Bishop of Rockville Centre