



June 2022

DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB); the Diocese of Rockville Centre remains vigilant in all efforts to create and maintain safe and sacred environments for all the faithful. With oversight provided by The Office for the Protection of Children and Young People, Diocesan Safe Environment Protocols are implemented in all parishes throughout the Diocese. These protocols include the following:

Education of the Faithful: Clergy, Employees and Volunteers are required to attend the workshop **Virtus: Protecting God's Children**. Virtus workshops are facilitated by trained volunteers and are offered year-round in parishes throughout the Diocese.

Our Diocese, blessed with diverse multicultural populations, stands firm in delivering the message of Safe Environments to all populations. Virtus facilitators provide workshops in Spanish and Creole.

Recognizing the importance of educating our children, youth and young adults in areas related to safety, the Diocese offers a safe environment program for children attending faith formation in first thru sixth grade. Foundational lessons of self-worth, identifying trustworthy adults, and learning to say NO! are presented in grades 1-2. Topics for children in grades 3-6 build on the foundational lessons and include issues related to internet safety and social media. Youth preparing to receive the sacrament of Confirmation participate in **Thoughtful and Safe: Life Lessons for Youth**. This virtual program for grades 7-9 addresses topics of safety while maintaining the Church's commitment to the sanctity of life, and human dignity. Children and youth attending our Catholic schools have participated in the Virtus program for youth: **Empowering God's Children**.

Background Screening: Background screening remains an important component of our Safe Environment protocols. Background screening applications have been updated and are now available on-line during the Virtus registration process. All active volunteers are rescreened at 5-year intervals.

Codes of Conduct: These are available during the Virtus registration process and outline specific behavioral standards expected of clergy, employees and volunteers. **Codes of Conduct for Youth** with attention to behaviors youth may not recognize as problematic (i.e.: posting photos on social media while volunteering in a ministry) are also available.

Audits: The Diocese of Rockville Centre participates in an annual audit to ensure compliance with the standards outlined in The Charter. This audit, conducted by an independent auditing team provides the Diocese with the opportunity to review areas of strength and strengthen areas that may need improvement. Beginning in 2004, the Diocese has participated in the annual audit and has consistently met the requirements of The Charter.

I wish to extend my deep gratitude to all the faithful for your dedication and commitment to the safety and well-being of those whom you serve. I reaffirm my commitment to uphold the mandates of The Charter. Please pray with me for continued healing of our Diocese and in particular for those who have been hurt by the Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend John O. Barres
Bishop of the Diocese of Rockville Centre