



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

September 2024

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

With the publication of *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops made a commitment to “sustain and strengthen safe environments within the Church for children and youth.” As your Bishop, I remain firm in my commitment to upholding the directives of the Charter.

In accord with those directives, the Diocese of Rockville Centre established and maintains robust Safe Environment protocols, by which all clergy, employees, and volunteers are required to:

1. Attend the *Virtus Protecting God’s Children* program.
2. Acknowledge Diocesan Codes of Conduct.
3. Undergo Background Screening at five-year intervals if engaged in active ministry.
4. Participate in monthly on-going training if engaged in ministries with children/youth.

These protocols have been in place since 2003, and we are vigilant in overseeing compliance.

Of course, the prevention of child abuse requires more than adult awareness. As caring adults, it is essential we provide youth with the tools needed to stay safe. Children attending our Catholic schools and those enrolled in our parish Faith Formation programs are instructed, within the context of Catholic morality, on topics of boundaries, safe and unsafe behaviors, and healthy relationships. *Virtus: Empowering God’s Children* is the curriculum used in our Catholic schools. *Think First-Stay Safe: Child Lures Prevention* and *Thoughtful and Safe Life Lessons* are the programs used with our children in Faith Formation programs.

I extend my deep gratitude to you, the faithful of the Diocese, for your participation and support of our efforts to maintain safe environments. Finally, I ask you to join me in joyful anticipation, as the Church awaits the announcement of the canonization of Blessed Carlo Acutis in 2025. Blessed Carlo, who died at the age of 15 in 2006 was a champion for the homeless, for those who were bullied and is being heralded as the patron saint of the internet. Let us pray to Blessed Carlo that our children and youth will stride toward holiness in all their endeavors. Let us continue to pray for healing and holiness of our Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend John O. Barres  
Bishop of Rockville Centre