



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 2026

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As your Bishop, it is both my responsibility and heartfelt pastoral concern to ensure that every child and young person within our Diocese is cherished, protected and nurtured in an environment that reflects the care of Christ Himself. In union with my brother Bishops throughout the United States, I reaffirm my unwavering commitment to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Through the faithful work of the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People, and through the dedication of clergy, employees and volunteers, we continue to meet and uphold necessary standards, including:


- Required attendance for all clergy, employees and volunteers in: *Virtus: Protecting God's Children for Adults*
- Regular background screening of all who minister, renewed every five years.
- Acknowledgement of Diocesan Codes of Conduct
- Annual safety education for our children, whether attending Catholic schools or parish Faith Formation programs.

These efforts have been in place since 2003, and we remain steadfast in ensuring that every parish and ministry reflects our pastoral responsibility to those we serve.

From 2024 to 2026, improvements to the Virtus platform have made Safe Environment compliance more efficient. The Catholic Youth Organization has further strengthened these efforts through a badge system for coaches who complete all requirements. I am grateful to CYO leadership, parish Safe Environment Coordinators, and the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People for their collaboration, and I am pleased that the Diocese continues to be found in compliance with the Charter through the annual independent audit by Stonebridge Business Partners.

Our efforts to protect children are not simply administrative task. They are also profound expressions of our Gospel mission. As Pope Francis reminded us: "The protection of minors is an integral part of the Church's mission." Let us continue walking together in hope, ensuring that every child experiences the safety, love and belonging they so rightly deserve.

With prayers for you and your families,


+ John O. Barres

Most Reverend John O. Barres, S.T.D., J.C.L., D.D.
Bishop of Rockville Centre