



Annual Letter to Diocese on Ongoing Commitment
to Safeguarding Children and Young People

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Every year since 2002 when the horrible tragedy and scandal of sex abuse of children and minors by Every year since 2002, I have written an open letter to all the faithful of the Diocese to give you a report on how we as a Diocese continue to fulfill our obligations and responsibilities to safeguard children and young people from the danger of sexual abuse by clerics and others within the Church. This is a solemn moral obligation I as your bishop accepted when the bishops of the United States adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* at Dallas in 2002. It is consistent with what I have done as your bishop beginning with my arrival here in September 2001 when I reviewed the unresolved cases and began to remove priests from pastoral ministry who had had credible allegations of sexual misconduct lodged against them.

At the same time that we were addressing these issues, we did then, and we do now, need to recognize that the priests of our diocese aside from those who have abused deserve and should always receive from us the utmost respect and support for the holiness of their lives and their dedication to faithful of this Diocese, a dedication that is proven day after day in their unstinting and often exhausting service to all the people entrusted to their pastoral care.

On February 22nd of this year, Ms. Eileen Puglisi, who is head of our Office for the Protection of Children and Young People, wrote the following to the members of our Diocesan Review Board: Since our last meeting, there have not been any new cases that would require an additional assessment by the Review Board. That is good news and suggests that our continuing improvement actions have been effective. Additional victims have come forward in cases that have previously been reviewed by the Diocesan Review Board and administrative action taken. These cases have been reported to the appropriate District Attorney in Suffolk County and Nassau County and the Diocese has offered help to the victim involved in each case. As a pastoral outreach, I continue to meet with victims if they so choose and where the purpose of the meetings is pastoral.

These meetings have been helpful.

In that context, allow me to bring you up to date on what has transpired this past year

as a way I seek to assure you that we continue to be diligent and that we are committed to doing all we can to protect the safety of every child and to make all our ecclesial entities in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, parishes, schools and the like, safe havens where parents may have confidence that their children and youth are not in danger.

Gavin Group Audit

In October 2010 the Gavin Group, Inc conducted a review and found the Diocese of Rockville Centre to be in full compliance with the Dallas Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. We continue to implement and maintain the standards because we are committed to making sure that our children and young people are protected in our churches, schools and agencies. This past year, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops decided to contract with a new vendor to conduct annual audits of all dioceses in our country. Starting in 2011, the StoneBridge Business Partners, Rochester, NY, will replace the Gavin Group, Inc. and they will now conduct the annual audits of all dioceses to assure compliance with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Safety Training

To date, approximately 97,000 volunteers and staff have attended the Virtus awareness and prevention program. Please know that in addition to attending the three- hour Virtus training session, those individuals who have substantial contact with children are required to read a monthly safety bulletin. These bulletins are sent out electronically as part of our continuous efforts to inform one and all how to protect children. There are 215 Virtus facilitators presently conducting sessions regularly in our parishes, schools and agencies. In all our schools and religious education programs, children are taught: a) what abuse is, b) personal safety tools to prevent abuse and c) how to report abuse of any kind.

Victim Assistance

The diocese continues to provide therapeutic support for victims and their families. A Support Group has been established and meets regularly.

Background Screening

To date, the Diocese of Rockville Centre has conducted approximately 97,000 background checks on all volunteers and employees.

We look forward to the Audit which will be conducted by the **StoneBridge Business Partners** this coming October. In the meantime, please consult the diocesan website www.drvc.org and click on the Protecting Children tab at the top of the home page for any new information as it develops.

While I am pleased to report that there were no new incidents brought to our attention that required removal of any priest, I want to assure you that every allegation is taken seriously, is immediately reported to the office of the appropriate District Attorney and is responded to by our Office which seeks to ascertain the facts and then reach out to any who have come to us and need therapeutic help. As a bishop I am daily reminded that this is a horrific tragedy that has scarred our Church. I will not become complacent and I insist that all of us must remain conscious and vigilant that the sins and crimes of the past remain just that, sins and crimes of the past.

To that end, may I recommend the prayer I composed for our use during Lent and beyond. Every parish has copies of the prayer card which resembles a bookmark. My brother priests and I urge you to pray it often whether alone or in groups as we seek forgiveness for these sins and reconciliation with God and one another. Only if we support one another with prayer and with a genuine sense of communion can we live in peace and harmony with God and one another.

As you read this, would you stop and offer this prayer:

*Dear God and Loving Father,
We ask your forgiveness for our sins
And for sins committed in the name of your Church.
In your loving mercy forgive especially those sins
That have harmed children and young people
As well as sins against the unborn, the poor and the vulnerable.
Help us to be reconciled to one another and make us holy in your sight
That, united in the one Body of Christ,
We may worship you with pure hearts,
Proclaim your name with faith and hope
And witness your love to all humankind.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen*

My prayer is that Christ who has reconciled all to Himself on the cross might make us one in building up the Church by our faith, our prayer and our good works which will bring us beyond the anger and frustration of the past into a new Springtime of mutual respect, support and love.

May God bless you all and may Mary, the Comforter of the Afflicted, bring peace to the hearts of all who have suffered so much.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

Bishop William Murphy
Bishop of Rockville Centre