



October 18, 2002 - Statement of Bernard Cardinal Law

Good Afternoon. Allow me to express my gratitude to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II and those who assist him, most notably His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, for this expression of solidarity, encouragement, and support, as well as for the assurance of their prayers. The letter of Cardinal Re informing Bishop Wilton Gregory and, through him, all the Bishops and Eparchs of the U.S.A., of the Holy See's response to our request for recognition clearly demonstrates that the Holy See shares the deep concern and urgent resolve of the bishops of the U.S. regarding the protection of children.

While the response of the Holy See to the "Norms" and "Charter" is generally positive, it also acknowledges the need for clarification within the "Norms" and "Charter" of certain particular points. This kind of communication is very much in keeping with the normal process by which Bishops' Conferences work with the Holy See to develop policies and procedures for use within a Conference. The establishment of a Mixed Commission to facilitate further reflection on and revision of the "Norms" and "Charter" with an aim towards the Commission having its recommendations ready for the November general meeting of the USCCB bodes well for an expeditious resolution of the concerns raised by the Holy See.

The Archdiocese of Boston remains committed to the principles laid out in the Charter and to the many programs and policies that we, as an Archdiocese, have undertaken to respond firmly and correctly to any allegation of sexual abuse of minors by a priest, deacon, or other Church personnel. The present policies and procedures of the Archdiocese for handling allegations of sexual misconduct with minors by clergy are in keeping with the norms of canon law and, as such, remain in effect. As you know, the Cardinal's Commission for the Protection of Children has recently presented me with a draft policy and procedures. The fruit of the Commission's work is now being reviewed by a broad range of people. Among these are the auxiliary bishops, the Presbyteral Council, the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, and specialists in theology and canon law. It is my desire that before year's end, I will be able to promulgate a new Archdiocesan policy for the handling of sexual abuse by clergy and Church personnel as a result of this review.

It is my fervent hope that the close collaboration of the Bishops on the Mixed Commission will serve to strengthen and refine both the national response of our Conference and the local response of our Archdiocese as we seek to do all that is possible to protect children from the horrible evil of sexual abuse.

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