



January 06, 2004 - Statement of Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley on the USCCB Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

In June 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) at its General Meeting in Dallas addressed the problem of sexual abuse of minors by clergy resulting in the document, the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Both this document as well as the attendant Essential Norms were endorsed by the Vatican, with the Essential Norms becoming legislation for all of the dioceses and eparchies of the United States. A mechanism for the review of the implementation of the Charter was put into place by the creation of a National Review Board comprised of high profile, independent professionals who accepted the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the Charter by each diocese. A very important part of their responsibilities was to bring about an audit of every diocese in this regard. To achieve this goal, the National Conference through its Office of Child and Youth Protection contracted a private, independent auditor, the Gavin Group. This organization dispatched their trained auditors, mostly former FBI agents, to visit each diocese and eparchy in order to conduct a study of how each local Church was dealing with sexual abuse and implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children. The Report published today in Washington is the result of these studies.

Today's report from the USCCB on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People clearly shows how far the Catholic Church in the United States has come in implementing programs and policies for the protection of children within our community. The national report also comments upon the work that needs to be continued in order to ensure that the good start we have made will continue into the future.

It is good that the report for the Archdiocese of Boston shows that the Archdiocese is in full compliance with the Charter. Our full compliance demonstrates how seriously the Church of Boston is committed to erasing the scourge of child abuse from our midst. First and foremost, we are grateful to the victim-survivors who had the courage to come forward and share the devastating stories of the effect abuse has had on them. We hope that the assessment offered in this report demonstrates that the Church is committed to responding to them.

Our gratitude is extended as well to all those who have worked so diligently to make this good work possible. In particular, the report offers two commendations, one for the work of the Archdiocese's outreach program under the guidance of Mrs. Barbara Thorp and her staff, and the second for the Archdiocese's aggressive efforts to ensure that 200,000 persons in the Archdiocese will receive safe environment training, this training being directed by Deacon Tony Rizzuto and his staff. In addition, it is important to note that each of the seven recommendations found in the report for Boston have already been addressed.

While the Archdiocese of Boston has made great strides in these matters, we, like the rest of the Church in the United States, recognize the work that needs to continue to further the important goal of protecting children from any form of abuse, not just in the community of the Church but in all of society. Our hope is that as the Church moves forward, our efforts will serve as an example and encouragement to all as how best to make this possible.

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