



Keeping **Protect**

OUR PROMISE TO

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION

BISHOP BLASE J. CUPICH 2009 NATIONAL SAFE ENVIRONMENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Chicago, Illinois
March 2, 2009

Moving Forward as a Church: Healing Broken Lives and Restoring Trust:

A Bishop's Perspective



Introduction and Word of Thanks

- I. **Understanding the Bishops' Commitment to Implementing the Charter**
- II. **Taking Account of What Has Been Done**
- III. **The Work Ahead of Us**

I. Understanding the Bishops' Commitment to Implementing the Charter

Dallas 2002 Remembered:

**The opening statement by Bishop
Wilton Gregory, President of the
U.S. Conference of Catholic
Bishops**



The Bishops' Commitment

“Our God-given duty as shepherds of the Lord's people holds us responsible and accountable to God and to the church for the spiritual and moral health of all of God's children, especially those who are weak and most vulnerable. It is we who need to confess, and so we do.

The Bishops' Commitment

“We are the ones, whether through ignorance or lack of vigilance or, God forbid, with knowledge, who allowed priest abusers to remain in ministry and reassigned them to communities where they continued to abuse.

The Bishops' Commitment

“We are the ones who chose not to report the criminal actions of priests to the authorities, because the law did not require this.

The Bishops' Commitment

“**We are the ones** who worried more about the possibility of scandal than bringing about the kind of openness that helps prevent abuse.

The Bishops' Commitment

“And we are the ones who, at times, responded to victims and their families as adversaries and not as suffering members of the church.

The Bishops' Commitment

“There has been a seismic shift in the bishops/Church’s whole approach to responding to accusations involving children and clergy and how to best keep children from being harmed.”

Protecting Children as the First Priority:

- 
- Placing Barriers
 - ☑ Safe Environment Coordinators
 - ☑ Codes of Conduct
 - ☑ Procedures and Policies
 - Doing Due Diligence
 - ☑ Background Checks
 - ☑ Safe Environment Training
 - ☑ Audits

Listening to and Bringing Healing to Victims

➤ Restoring Trust: What is at Stake?

If we do not keep our promise to protect, pledge to heal we cannot be credible **on any other issue.**

II. Taking Account of What Has Been Done

➤ A New Culture

- Church recognizes sexual abuse allegations for what they are – a sin and a crime
- In response to the *Charter* mandate in 2002, dioceses and parishes set up aggressive safe environment training programs that now are the envy of all other organizations that work with children.

II. Taking Account of What Has Been Done

➤ A New Culture

- These child protection efforts outline specific steps to be followed so that decisions on what constitutes appropriate behavior between an adult and child are not based on biases or personal interpretations. These efforts also emphasize respect for boundaries between persons and empowerment of young people to resist what makes them uncomfortable.

II. Taking Account of What Has Been Done

➤ A New Culture

- Our Default Response in this New Culture:

If we are to err in establishing and enforcing policies, it must be on the side of caution to ensure that children are safe.

Specific Tasks Accomplished

- Trained more than 1.8 million clergy, employees, and volunteers in parishes in how to create safe environments and prevent child sexual abuse.
- Prepared more than 5.8 million children to recognize abuse and protect themselves.
- Ran criminal record checks on more than 1.7 million volunteers and employees, educators, clerics and candidates for ordination.

Specific Tasks Accomplished

- Taken the leadership in the ongoing develop of SET materials and broadened the scope and context that takes into account that:
 - Children deserve to grow up with a healthy understanding of sexuality and its proper place in human relationships.
 - They should be spared the degrading manifestations and the crude manipulation of sexuality so prevalent today.

The challenge families face in their home entertainment choices:

- “What does it mean to speak of child protection when pornography and violence can be viewed in so many homes through media widely available today?”

*Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the U.S. Bishops, 16
April 2008*

III. The Work Ahead of Us

- Study of the Causes and Context by John Jay College of Criminal Justice
 - We Can Make a Contribution to Others Who Work With Children.
- As a church which confronts this problem firsthand, sadly we are in a position of knowing the horror of the problem and hopefully, are in a position of knowing how to address it.

III. The Work Ahead of Us

- Statistics tell us that sexual exploitation of children is rampant in society. *Darkness to Light*, a national child sexual abuse prevention program reports that one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before the age of 18.
- It also reports that an estimated 39 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse exist in America today.

Review of the Charter Annual Audits and Reports

- Bishops/Eparchs Invited to Participate (February 6, 2009) by providing their thoughts and comments regarding any revisions they believe would strengthen the Church's role in reaching out to victims and providing a safe environment for the children and youth.

Review of the Charter

Annual Audits and Reports

- We will be guided by the same principles used by the CPCYP in preparing its revised draft *Charter* in 2005:
 1. To give stability to the Conference's efforts, the framework for action embodied in the *Charter* should remain consistent and **be revised only where some important principle has been omitted or the text is out of date**
 2. To provide a framework for action, **the *Charter* should embody general principles** rather than specific instructions or a list of best practices for implementing the principles.

Review of the Charter Annual Audits and Reports

- Bishops were encouraged to include their diocesan and religious priests, lay leaders and those in the diocese who are involved in child protection and education in their diocesan consultations.
- The deadline for returning submissions to the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection is September 30, 2009.

Review of the Charter Annual Audits and Reports

- The *Charter* Review Committee consists of members of the CPCYP, the National Review Board and consultants who will synopsise all comments, concerns, and suggestions. The Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the National Advisory Council and the NRB will also participate in the review process at the national level.

Review of the Charter Annual Audits and Reports

- These results will be compiled and provided to the Administrative Committee in September of 2010. After the final revised text is approved for placement on the November 2010 General Meeting agenda, the entire text will be subject to the bishops' customary amendment process. The 2005 *Charter* remains the policy of the USCCB until the full body of bishops makes other provisions.

Restoring Trusts With Our Priests



Closing Comments and Time for Questions and Answers





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