

April is Child Abuse Prevention month

USCCB Charter to protect children must continue

Washington – Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), reiterated the U.S. bishops' resolve to deal firmly with clerics who abuse children in a March 22 statement.

He highlighted and endorsed efforts by bishops, clergy and laity to implement the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," which was drafted by the bishops in 2002 to deal with the crisis of sexual abuse of minors by clerics. Archbishop Dolan said child abusers will not be tolerated in ministry.

The statement said that in light of the recent disclosures about the Church's response to the sexual abuse of minors by priests, the Archbishop has been asked by his brother bishops who were gathered for the recent meeting of the Administrative Committee of the USCCB to offer reassurances that this painful issue continues to receive our careful attention, that the protection of our children and young people is of highest priority, and that the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" remains strongly in place.

In his statement the Archbishop said, "Over the past nine years, we have constantly reviewed the high promises and rigorous mandates of the Charter, as we continually try to make it even more effective. Thanks to the input of our National Review Board, Catholic parents, professionals, the victim-survivor community, law enforcement officials, and our diocesan victim-assistance coordinators, we keep refining the efficiency of the



"Charter." We want to learn from our mistakes and we welcome constructive criticism," he said.

The statement also said that the USCCB has a long-planned review of the "Charter" scheduled for their June meeting.

In his statement, the Archbishop also said, "The arrival of April, National Child Abuse Prevention Month, provides us the providential opportunity to unite with all Americans in a renewed resolve to halt the scourge of sexual abuse of youth in our society.

"We bishops recommit ourselves to the rigorous mandates of the Charter, and renew our confidence in its effectiveness . . .," he said.

"We remain especially firm in our commitment to remove permanently from public ministry any priest who committed such an intolerable offense," he added.

Archbishop Dolan assured that the annual outside audits by forensic experts will continue, "checking that we remain faithful to the processes in place to protect our young people, promote healing of victims/survivors, and restore trust."

Since 2010, Bishop John M. LeVoiv has served on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People. Periodically committee meetings are held with Web cams via the Internet.

"In short, the progress made must continue and cannot be derailed; we want to strengthen it even more; we can never stop working at it, because each child and young person must always be safe, loved, and cherished in the Church. We are encouraged in this resolve by the words of Pope Benedict XVI to the bishops of the United States during his Apostolic Visit in 2008: "It is your God-given responsibility as pastors to bind up the wounds caused by every breach of trust, to foster healing, to promote reconciliation, and to reach out with loving concern to those so seriously wronged."

For a full copy of the statement, visit www.usccb.org.

Upcoming VIRTUS Safe Environment Sessions for adults:

April 5 – Church of St. Clotilde, Green Valley, 7 p.m.

April 28 – Church of St. Mary, Arlington, 6:30 p.m.