



Office of the President

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Most Reverend Timothy Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People Statement by Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan March 24, 2011

In light of the recent disclosures about the Church's response to the sexual abuse of minors by priests, I have been asked by my brother bishops, gathered for the recent meeting of the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 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* that we adopted in 2002 remains strongly in place.

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. In fact, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has a long-planned review of the *Charter* scheduled for our June meeting.

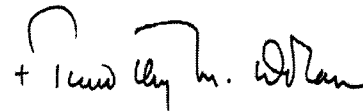
The arrival of April, *National Child Abuse Prevention Month*, provides us the providential opportunity to unite with all Americans in a renewed resolve to halt the scourge of sexual abuse of youth in our society.

We bishops recommit ourselves to the rigorous mandates of the *Charter*, and renew our confidence in its effectiveness. We repeat what we have said in the *Charter*: "We make our own the words of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II: that the sexual abuse of young people is by every standard wrong and rightly considered a crime by society; it is also an appalling sin in the eyes of God" (Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers, April 23, 2002). We remain especially firm in our commitment to remove permanently from public ministry any priest who committed such an intolerable offense.

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. We also thank our diocesan review boards, and those who lead our extensive programs of child protection and background checks for *all* priests, deacons, teachers, youth workers and volunteers in our expansive apostolates to young people.

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.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy M. Dolan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops