



# NEWS

Department of Communications  
3211 Fourth Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20017  
202-541-3200  
Fax 202-541-3173  
www.usccb.org/comm

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## **PRESIDENT OF USCCB REITERATES BISHOPS' RESOLVE TO DEAL FIRMLY WITH CLERICS WHO ABUSE CHILDREN**

### **Clerics who sexually abuse minors are forbidden from ministry Backs April Child Abuse Prevention Month for protection of children Implementation of *Charter* to protect children must continue**

WASHINGTON—Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 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.

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

The statement was developed during the USCCB Administrative Committee meeting in Washington. The Administrative Committee is the highest ranking body of bishops when the full body is not in session. It meets every September, March and November.

The full statement follows.

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. "

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