

Audit of Dioceses' Compliance with Charter for Protection of Youth Released Today

The results of an independent survey of compliance of every Catholic diocese and eparchy in the United States with the articles of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* were announced today at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Auditors with the Gavin Group, Inc., of Boston, Massachusetts, found the Archdiocese of Baltimore to be in full compliance with the *Charter*, commending the church for instituting a number of policies and practices to address the problem of sexual abuse of minors by clergy prior to the adoption of the *Charter*.

The compliance audit was conducted to determine whether Catholic dioceses and eparchies (dioceses of the Eastern Catholic Churches) are implementing the *Charter*, which the Catholic Bishops adopted at their meeting in Dallas in June 2002. The national Office of Child and Youth Protection established by the bishops, is to produce "an annual public report on the progress made in implementing the standards" in the *Charter*. This compliance audit forms the basis for the first report.

"We remain deeply saddened by the events that brought us to this point in our Church's history," Cardinal William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore, said. "I am hopeful that this report will assist us in maintaining transparency in communicating with the faithful and will provide assurance that we have taken the first of many steps toward the creation of a safe environment for all of our children and young people."

In addition to receiving four commendations, the Archdiocese was issued four recommendations for strengthening its efforts to comply with the terms of the *Charter*. In September, auditors recommended that the Archdiocese develop a checklist to ensure priests removed from active ministry receive notifications

required by the *Charter*. They further recommended that provisions be made to ensure victims calling to report abuse immediately speak with an individual, that background investigations be promptly conducted for all personnel having regular contact with children and that a monitoring and tracking system be developed to ensure compliance with Archdiocesan policy regarding such investigations. It was also recommended that immediate notification be made to dioceses to which priests who have been removed from active ministry have moved for residence.

“The Archdiocese of Baltimore has taken steps to address the recommendations of the auditors which will further strengthen our efforts to protect children. The audit process has been most effective in helping us identify any areas where we can improve upon the safeguards we have put in place,” Cardinal Keeler said. The Cardinal received a final letter from the auditors in late October stating that the Archdiocese was in full compliance with the Charter.

The Archdiocese was commended for the excellence and diversity of its review board, its in-house development and implementation of a safe environment program, and the establishment of a code of conduct/subsequent training effort for personnel having regular contact with children. It was further commended for the excellence of its communications policy and outreach to parishes directly affected by sexual abuse.

The Gavin Group, which recruited and trained more than 50 auditors with backgrounds in law enforcement, conducted the survey measuring a period from June 2002 to November 2003. The audits were conducted on site by teams of two to six auditors. Most audits were completed within five working days. The auditors conducted interviews with the bishop/eparch and diocesan officials responsible for *Charter* implementation, as well as with victims/survivors who had reported instances of abuse, state’s attorneys, review board members and parishioners. Auditors also had access to relevant records and documentation.

The full *Report on the Implementation of the ‘Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People’* is available on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

website, www.usccb.org.

- Other Archdiocesan links pertaining to the Protection of Children and Youth