

My Dear People:

In one of my previous messages to you I asked the question, "will we ever get it right?" It was raised in response to the growing awareness of how our Church had failed to protect our children from harm. We failed within our own institutions; we failed within society as a whole.

To address and correct this past "sin of omission," last June the bishops of the United States drafted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and Essential Norms for Diocesan Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. These documents were subsequently approved by the Vatican in December 2002, and the Essential Norms became particular law for the dioceses of the United States. From the Charter and Norms I now present three particular items.

First, the Essential Norms mandate that each diocese have a written policy on the sexual abuse of minors by clerics and other church personnel. I am grateful to say we have had such a policy in place for the past ten years. I now present to you our updated Policy for Protection of Children and Young People which incorporates the elements of the USCCB Norms and Charter in order to bring an even greater awareness to the whole People of God of how we can protect our greatest gift-our children.

Second, a primary mandate for dioceses is the creation of a "safe environment" for our children and young people. To address this need, the Diocese of Dodge City will implement the Protecting God 's Children program. This program will assist all adults who minister with children to identify the warning signs of abuse, teach strategies for maintaining safe environments and how to teach children to protect themselves. All adults who deal with children (e.g. parish staff, teachers, catechists, youth ministers, volunteers, etc.) will be required to participate in this training.

Third, within the mandate for dioceses to create a safe environment program is the requirement to distribute and enforce a Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct provides the foundation for proper behavior and safety measures for all persons within the diocese, but most especially for those entrusted with the care of our children.

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

The Diocese of Dodge City POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, and all the stipulations contained therein, becomes effective June 15, 2003.

Most Reverend Ronald M. Gilmore

Bishop of Dodge City

Janice Grochowsky, CSJ

Chancellor