

# PROMISE TO *Protect*

In response to the crisis of the sexual abuse of children by clergy in the Catholic Church, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops drafted a landmark document in Dallas, Texas, at its 2002 summer assembly. In this statement, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (the *Charter*), the bishops recommit themselves to victims/survivors and their families and to each other in order to ensure—to the best of their abilities—that sexual abuse of minors within the Church will **never happen again**. A comprehensive set of procedures to address allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy, the *Charter* includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse.

The *Charter* directs action in the following matters:

- Creation of a safe environment for children and young people
- Healing and reconciliation for victims/survivors
- Prompt and effective response to allegations of abuse
- Cooperation with civil authorities
- Disciplining of offenders
- Providing for future accountability by establishing a national **Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection**

## What Is the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection (CYP)?

The CYP is part of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and is located at the national headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Secretariat's work is monitored by the National Review Board, which was also established by the bishops at the 2002 Dallas meeting. According to the *Charter*, the mandate of the CYP is threefold:

1. To assist each (arch)diocese/eparchy in the United States in implementing **safe environment programs** to ensure safety and security for all children as they participate in church and religious activities
2. To develop a **mechanism to ensure compliance** of the bishops with the responsibilities set forth in the *Charter*
3. To prepare a **public annual report** describing the compliance of each (arch)diocese/eparchy with the provisions of the *Charter*

***"To create a safe environment for children is of paramount importance for the Church, and everyone in the Church is responsible for ensuring that this exists. No one can say, 'It's not my job.'"***

TERESA M. KETTELKAMP, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
SECRETARIAT OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION



## What Are Safe Environment Programs?

In 2003, the CYP called for the planning and full implementation of safe environment programs in all (arch)dioceses/eparchies, as mandated by the *Charter*. Safe environment programs must include the following components:

- A **written code of conduct** for employees and volunteers who work with young people
- **Training programs for adults** whose duties include ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors (such as parents, ministers, educators, church personnel, and volunteers); training should include materials on prevention, identification, and response and reporting of abuse
- **Training programs for children and young people** that include materials on personal safety
- A **mechanism for background checks** of all personnel who have regular contact with minors

**Safe environment programs may also include the following:**

- **Methods for outreach to parents**, including formal training sessions, independent reading material, videos, and/or information on the diocesan website
- A commitment to incorporate the safe environment program into the **long-term, ongoing mission** of the (arch)diocese/eparchy

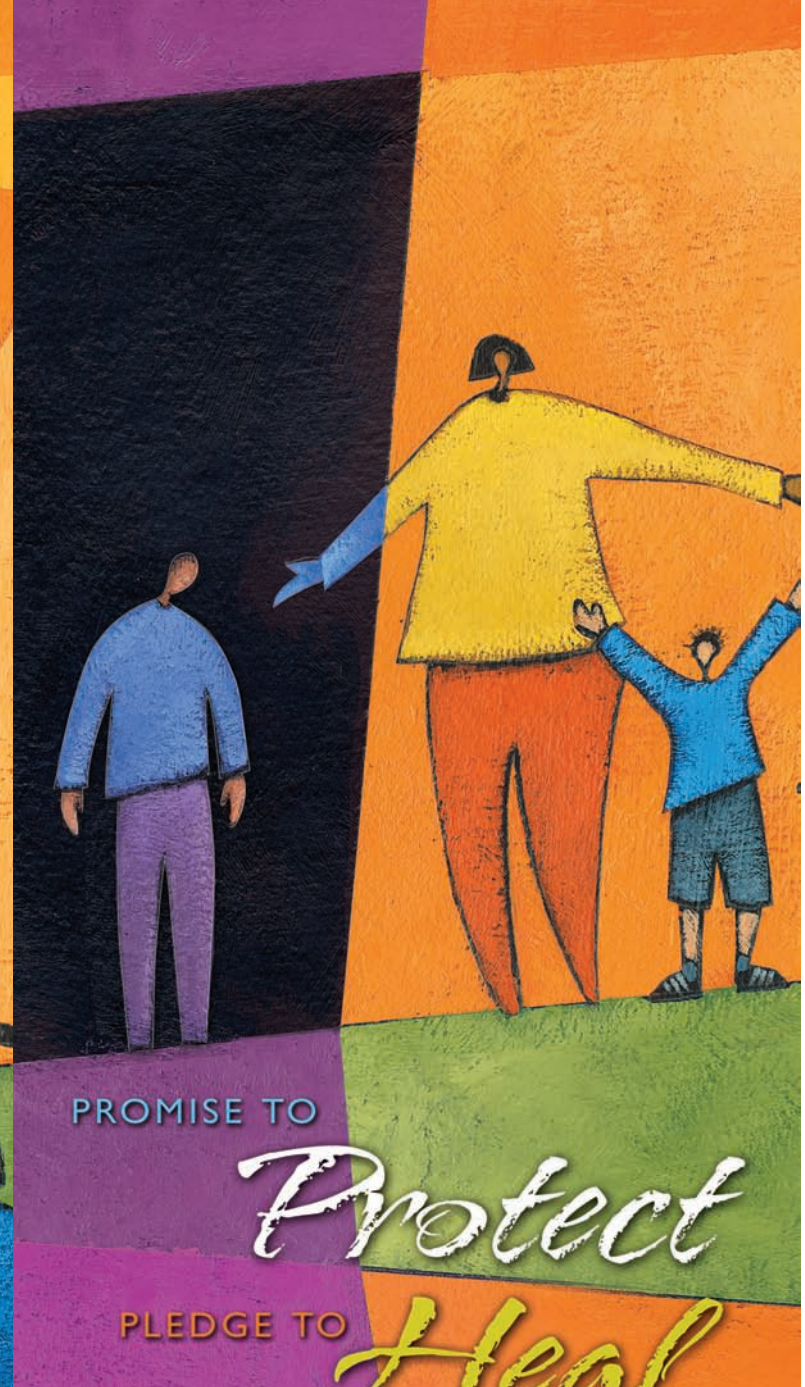
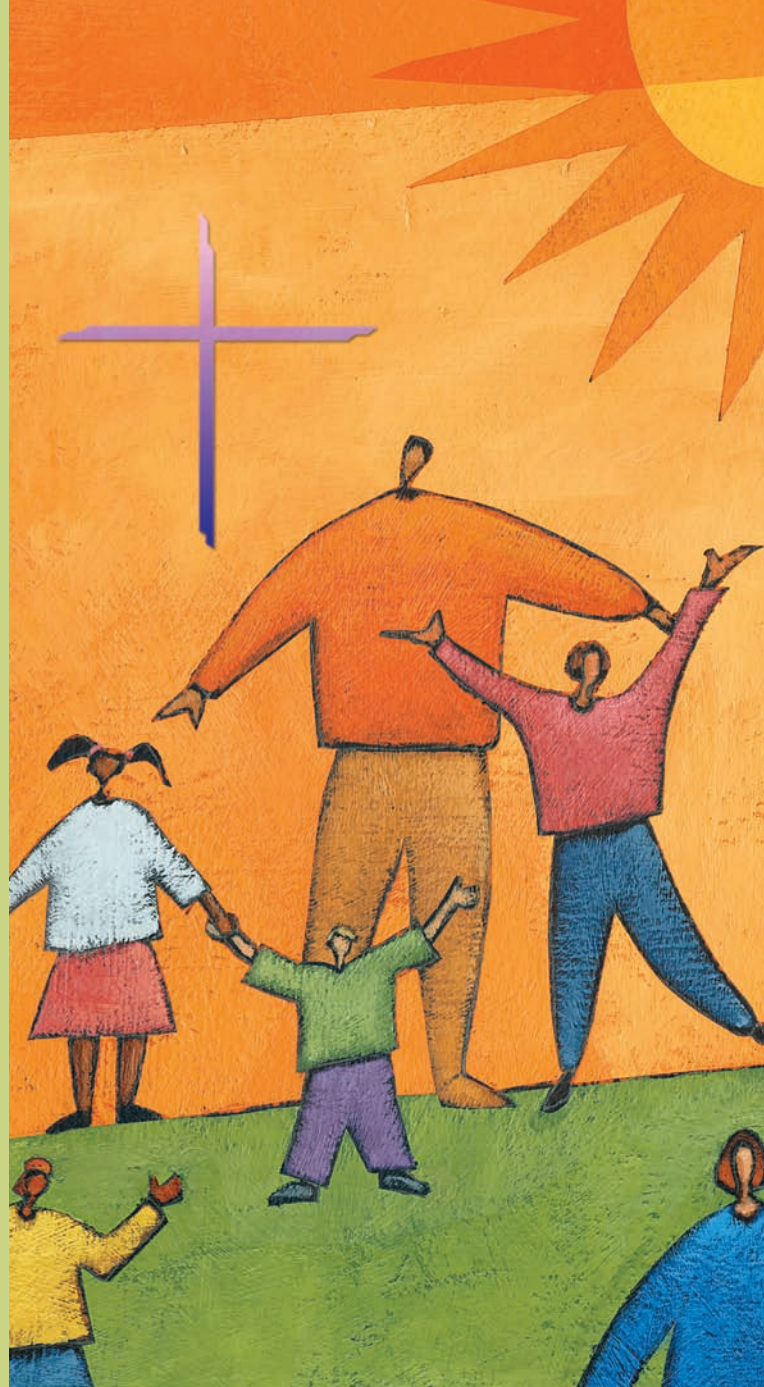
## PLEDGE TO *Heal*

For victims and survivors of sexual abuse by someone representing the Catholic Church, the CYP offers support and resources to begin the process of help and healing. The CYP recommends several steps that victims/survivors can take:

- Contact the appropriate law enforcement agency, which can help to determine options for making a criminal complaint.
- Contact a local child protection agency, a private attorney, a support group, an abuse hotline, or a mental health professional.
- Contact the diocesan/eparchial victim assistance coordinator, who is available to help victims/survivors to make a formal complaint of abuse to the diocese or eparchy, to arrange a personal meeting with the bishop or his representative, and to obtain support for the needs of the individual and families.

***“We bishops and eparchs must tenaciously maintain our commitment to the Charter mandates to ensure that children and youth are safe and that the victims of clergy sex abuse are able to heal from the effects of sexual abuse by representatives of the Church. Much progress has been made by the Catholic Church in addressing the impact of clergy sexual abuse of minors, but continued vigilance is a must.”***

CARDINAL FRANCIS GEORGE, PRESIDENT  
UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS



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Place (arch)diocesan/eparchial victim assistance information here.



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