

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In July 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published the first *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. For the past 15 years, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has been a leader in implementing the *Charter* through its child abuse prevention policies, procedures, programs and resources.

Since inception of the *Charter*, the Archdiocesan Office of Safeguard the Children has trained 300,000 adults in the VIRTUS® Child Abuse Prevention Adult Awareness programs and more than 1.4 million children and young people in the children's program. Moreover, through our systematic process of background checks of Church personnel, 168,000 adults have been fingerprinted.

This brochure, along with the *Archdiocesan Administrative Handbook*, Chapter 9: Safe Environment (<http://handbook.la-archdiocese.org/chapter-9>), will assist you in learning more about this important initiative.

Thank you for your commitment to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded in our parishes, schools, ministries and communities. Together we are making a difference.

I entrust all our children and families to the tender care and protection of Our Blessed Mother Mary.

+ José H. Gomez

Most Reverend José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles

## **Sexual Abuse of Minors - A Pervasive Social Problem**

Child abuse is a frightening social reality. Numerous studies, while not in full agreement, estimate that some 40% of girls and 30% of boys suffer some form of molestation by an adult during their childhood and adolescence, with the majority of child sexual abuse occurring within the setting of an extended family. We as the "People of God" are called to work together to stop all forms of sexual abuse, wherever they occur.

### **Church Teaching on the Sexual Abuse of Minors**

Church teaching condemns the sexual abuse of children and youth as seriously sinful. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Connected to incest is any sexual abuse perpetrated by adults on children or adolescents entrusted to their care. The offense is compounded by the scandalous harm done to the physical and moral integrity of the young, who will remain scarred by it all their lives, and the violation of responsibility for their upbringing." (2389)

### **Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People**

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was adopted by the Bishops of the United States in June 2002. This important document contains the *Essential Norms* which are the Church's response to child sexual abuse and the concrete plan to work actively in the prevention of sexual abuse. Key components of the implementation of the *Charter* include:

#### **1) Office of Victims Assistance Ministry Helps Abused Victims Find Healing**

The Office of Victims Assistance Ministry of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles was created in April 2002 to deal with allegations of past or current sexual abuse by clergy, religious or any lay person working or volunteering for the Archdiocese. The Office is charged with creating a safe and compassionate environment

for victims to come forward, while ensuring that civil authorities are notified and victims are provided with counseling and other assistance in the healing process.

**Call The Office of Victims Assistance Ministry at (800) 355-2545 to:**

- report misconduct by a priest, deacon or other person working or volunteering for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.
  - get information about the Archdiocese's ongoing commitment to provide programs, resources and outreach to victims/survivors of sexual abuse.
  - report abuse suffered in another diocese and receive assistance in connecting with the appropriate persons in that diocese.
- [www.la-archdiocese.org/protecting/vam](http://www.la-archdiocese.org/protecting/vam)

#### **2) Office of Safeguard the Children and the Formation of Safeguard the Children Parish Committees**

The establishment of the Office of Safeguard the Children and formation of Safeguard the Children Parish Committees was mandated by Cardinal Roger Mahony in 2002. The Office of Safeguard the Children assists these permanent Parish Committees in implementing child sexual abuse prevention education, Safe Environment policies, procedures and resources.

[www.la-archdiocese.org/protecting/safeguard](http://www.la-archdiocese.org/protecting/safeguard)

#### **3) Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education for Adults**

VIRTUS® "Protecting God's Children" is a three-hour training for adults which teaches the five basic steps of child sexual abuse prevention. This program is mandated for all adults who work or volunteer with and around children or youth on a regular basis. Nearly 300,000 clergy, staff, volunteers and parents have attended the program. For information call: (213) 637-7227.

<https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus>