



National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People

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Cardinal Francis George, OMI, President
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Your Eminence:

Article 10 of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* provides that the National Review Board, among its other responsibilities, is to review the Annual Report of the Office of Child and Youth Protection. The Board has done so and recommends publication of the 2007 Annual Report as it is forwarded to you with this letter.

As the Administrative Committee prescribed in 2006, the audit period for all dioceses and eparchies is now standardized on the customary July 1–June 30 fiscal year. During 2007 all dioceses and eparchies (except those who refused to participate) were audited for the period beginning with the various dates when their last audits ended and ending as of June 30, 2007. Thus the audits reported in this Annual Report are for varying lengths of time from twelve to twenty-two months.

In 2006, the Board recommended auditing *Charter* compliance at the parish level. During 2007, this recommendation was implemented on a voluntary pilot basis in nine dioceses and one eparchy. We believe the results justify extending the parish-level auditing and we hope that bishops will agree with us. Examination of parish implementation by the auditors can provide bishops with important management information as they work to implement the *Charter*.

The greatest challenges for compliance are posed by Article 12 on safe environment training. We believe the mobility of the population to be trained makes 100% compliance difficult, but note proudly that millions of American Catholics have received this training since 2002.

In December 2007, the Board published an open letter to the American Catholic Faithful, which is reprinted in the Annual Report. Principally authored by Dr. Patricia O. Ewers, my predecessor as Chair, the letter reports on the Board's work since Dallas and its view of the major challenges ahead. In my view, the Conference owes Dr. Ewers a debt of gratitude for summarizing so well where we stand after five years of hard work at implementing the *Charter*.

Unfortunately, the bishop of the Diocese of Lincoln continues to refuse to participate in the audit process; this year, he is joined by four Eastern Catholic eparchs. The Board is continually reminded that this conduct, though undoubtedly within an ordinary's canonical power, scandalizes the faithful, who cannot understand resistance to a simple measure for the protection of children.

Very truly yours,

Michael R. Merz
Chair