

## OVERVIEW of Safe Environment Program

### Protecting Our Children: Promise to Protect – Pledge to Heal

Sacred Scripture teaches that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God[i], from which flows the dignity of the human person.[ii] The Church safeguards and protects this God-given dignity and condemns all forms of abuse or neglect of people of all ages. The Diocesan Policy for the Protection of Minors deals specifically with the sexual abuse of minors by a member of the clergy, religious, lay person, employee or commissioned volunteer, as well as the Diocese's obligation to protect children, young people, and vulnerable adults by providing a safe environment in order to prevent sexual abuse. It is available to members of the community upon request and by downloading from the Diocese of Alexandria website ([www.diocesealex.org](http://www.diocesealex.org) – in the list of Safe Environment downloadable documents).

[i] (Gn 1:26) “Then God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...’”

[ii] Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 225, 356, 1700 ff, 1934.

In response to the crisis of the sexual abuse of children by clergy or a representative of the Catholic Church, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) 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 (Charter)*, revised in 2005 and again in 2011, 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 or a representative of the Catholic Church, the *Charter* includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse:

- Creation of a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Healing and reconciliation for victims and survivors
- Prompt and effective response to allegations of abuse
- Cooperation with civil authorities
- Disciplining of offenders
- Provision for future accountability by establishment of national Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection (SCYP)

### How to make a report of sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric or church worker/volunteer of the Diocese of Alexandria:

1. Contact your local law enforcement agency  
– and/or –  
the Louisiana Child Abuse Hotline: 1-855-452-5437
2. Then, contact the diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator (VAC), Dr. Lee Kneipp, Clinical Psychologist at 318-542-9805, who is available to help victims/survivors to make a formal complaint of abuse to the diocese to arrange a personal meeting with the bishop or his delegate, and to obtain support for the needs of the individual and families. To reach the VAC for the *Spanish-speaking*, call Mr. José Colls, at 318-542-2299.

*“We can’t give the victims of abuse back their innocence, but we can assure them that we will do all in our power to see to it that no child is so harmed again.” --Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, Archdiocese of Atlanta*