

Put Out Into the Deep

## Protecting Children



Bishop DiMarzio

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Each year, the Board established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to oversee the implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People issues an annual report. The report for 2006 has just been published and it gives information of how the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People has been implemented throughout the archdioceses, dioceses and eparchies of the United States.

As you may recall, in 2002 the Church was faced with a new issue of understanding the depth of sexual abuse within the Church itself by members of the clergy. The Bishops that year gathered in Dallas and prepared the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, as well as canonical norms for dealing with those who perpetrated these crimes. At the same time, the pledge to protect and heal was made and resulted in the various prevention programs throughout the dioceses in the United States. The full report is available on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Web site, [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

The general report shows the success of the Charter in identifying victims and survivors of abuse and bringing forth allegations. This is the key element. We must assist those who have been abused and protect others from ever being abused. Progress is being made, and outreach to victims and survivors is a priority for the Church. In our own diocese, we have an extensive program of outreach and counseling for any victims who present themselves, under the direction of our Victims Assistance Coordinator, Sister Ellen Patricia Finn, O.P., of Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens. This initiative, while extraordinarily difficult and delicate, has occasioned many moments of real healing and renewal. These moments would not have been possible without the many hours of care and prayer Sister Ellen Patricia has spent with these victims. They, as well as the Diocese, owe Sister Ellen Patricia our sincere thanks.

One of the purposes of the annual report is to track any new cases of clergy sexual abuse. Fortunately, there is a dramatic diminution of any reported cases, and those which are reported are usually of an historical nature, although 16 new cases have been reported throughout the United States. These would be cases in which a credible allegation has been made. If we look at the larger picture, however, we recognize that it is only four percent of the Catholic priests in the United States in the last 60 years who have done a huge amount of damage. The other 96 percent have been faithful servants of the Lord. The vast majority of those who have been proven to be abusers are no longer priests, or have been removed from ministry.

The real purpose of the Charter was to protect our children. Church investment in child protection efforts has increased nationally 35 percent. The Church in the United States spent more than \$27 million for child protection efforts in 2006. To date more than six million children have participated in child protection programs. I take this opportunity to thank Sister Patricia Hudson, C.S.J., Child Protection Coordinator for the Diocese of Brooklyn, for her extraordinary efforts in reaching out to our children in Catholic schools, religious education programs and those who come in contact with Church personnel. The education of our children in ways in which they can protect themselves from any type of abuse is critical.

Cooperation of our parishes has been extraordinary; there has been a massive educational effort that has taken place in record time. We have conducted background checks on all employees who have contact with children. Any new employees must undergo a background check and sign a Code of Conduct before they can have any contact with children.

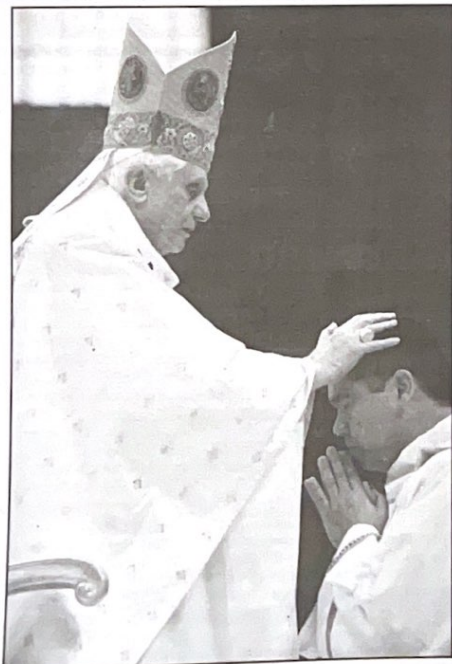
The Church has been a leader in many social efforts in the past. Unfortunately, the failure to understand the depth of the sexual abuse crisis within the Church will be a sad page in our history. What

is past, however, can teach us how in the future we can be in the forefront of protecting our nation's children against crimes of sexual abuse, because it is not only in the context of the Church that abuse takes place, but more prevalent is the issue in families, schools and other places where children are vulnerable.

Another aspect of the annual report is the commitment of the Bishops in the United States to the research by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to understand the causes and context of clergy sexual abuse. I myself am a consultant to the research currently being undertaken by John Jay College, since I have a background in social research. I can personally attest that the objectivity shown by John Jay and the findings will give direction for future means of prevention. Another initiative the Bishops have launched is to educate our children regarding Internet pornography, a problem that is growing significantly in our society. It is important for the Church to exercise leadership in this area and to make groundbreaking initiatives to ensure protection of our children in any way.

Our own diocese will continue to protect our children, to reach out to victims and to deal justly with any accusations that are made. I use this occasion to thank our Diocesan Review Board, which investigates allegations of abuse and advises me concerning the credibility of allegations. These volunteers meet twice a month for many hours, a painstaking and heart-breaking task of sifting through allegations and testimony, with an aim to bringing justice to a sad situation.

Truly, the Church has "put out into the deep" in its efforts to protect our young people from abuse in the Church and without. I ask you to pray for all victims of sexual abuse, especially those perpetrated by clergy, that their healing by the Lord may be thorough. I take this opportunity to thank all those whose efforts have made our diocesan program successful, and although many of its aspects are inconvenient, I know it is worth the effort to protect the gift of children that God has given us.



## Picture This!

Pope Benedict XVI ordains Juan Carlos Mari, son of the pope's official photographer, Arturo Mari, during a Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican April 29.



### Bishop DiMarzio's Calendar

Sunday, May 6 - 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m., Mass and Parish Visitation, St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Woodhaven.

Monday, May 7 - 3 p.m., Assignment Board meeting, Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston.  
- 5:30 p.m., Mass and Dinner, Sisters' Jubilee, Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston.

Thursday, May 10 - CLINIC Annual Convening, Tucson, Arizona.

Friday, May 11 - 12 p.m., World Communications Day Luncheon, Brooklyn Marriott.

Saturday, May 12 - 11 a.m., Confirmation, St. Francis of Assisi/St. Blaise Church, Crown Heights.  
- 5 p.m., Confirmation, Holy Family Church, Canarsie.