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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AUDIT SHOWS FEWEST REPORTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY CLERICS SINCE 2004;
MOST INCIDENTS FROM DECADES AGO**

**Accusations against diocesan clergy drop a third from last year
Virtually all cases from decades ago
More than six million children have undergone safe environment training**

WASHINGTON—The 2009 annual report on compliance with the U.S. bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* shows the fewest number of victims, allegations and offenders in dioceses since 2004. Most cases reported to dioceses were from decades ago.

The data show that in 2009 there were 398 allegations and 286 offenders reported to dioceses, most from earlier decades. Of the allegations reported in 2009, six allegations (2 percent) involved children under the age of 18 in 2009. About an eighth of the allegations in 2009 (48) were unsubstantiated or determined to be false by the end of the year.

Similar declines were found in data from religious orders of men.

Data for the 2009 calendar year were collected by the Georgetown University-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). It began gathering data on sexual abuse of minors by clerics in 2004 as part of the bishops' annual report on compliance with the *Charter*. The audit report can be found at http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/annual_report2009.shtml

CARA reported that most allegations cited were against pre-teen or teenage males and occurred decades ago.

“For the majority of new allegations (71 percent) brought to dioceses, the abuse began between 1960 and 1984. The most common time period for allegations reported in 2009 was 1975-1979,” CARA noted.

Costs paid by dioceses for settlements, therapy for victims, support of offenders, attorney fees and other costs amounted to \$104,439,629 in 2009. Of this total, 53 percent was for

settlements with victims and another six percent for therapy for victims if not already included in settlements.

“Compared to 2008, amounts paid for settlements in 2009 decreased by 83 percent and the amount paid in attorneys’ fees declined by three percent,” CARA reported.

Dioceses also invested more than \$21 million for child protection efforts such as training programs, background checks and salaries for staff, CARA reported.

The annual audit looks at dioceses’ compliance with the 17-point *Charter* adopted by the bishops in 2002. Auditors examine steps dioceses take to deal with allegations of abuse, reports of such allegations to civil authorities, and efforts to prevent child sexual abuse.

Virtually all 195 dioceses and eparchies in the United States participated in the audit. Six refused to participate including the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, and five eparchies (Eastern rite dioceses): the Eparchies of St. Peter the Apostle for Chaldeans; Eparchy of Newton for Melkites; Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg in New York for Armenian Catholics; Eparchy of St. Josaphat of Parma for Ukrainians; and Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance of Newark for Syrians.

The *Charter* compliance audits, which cover the time period July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009. They found 21 cases of allegations against current minors. Nine allegations were against international priests visiting or serving in the United States. Their countries of origin included Pakistan (1), Nigeria (1), El Salvador (2), Poland (1), Mexico (2), and India (2).

Almost six million, or 96 percent of children in Catholic schools or religious education programs, underwent Safe Environment training, and all but two dioceses that were audited, the Diocese of Baker, Oregon and the Diocese of Fresno, California, were compliant by year’s end with this particular provision of the *Charter*.

“The bishop of Baker feels it is inappropriate to provide any kind of sex education to any pre-puberty age child,” the report noted. It added, however, that the diocese does promote a program to help parents to provide safe environment training for their children. The Fresno Diocese was found non-compliant because it could not provide documentation showing that one quarter of its children in Catholic school and religious education programs had been trained.

The audit found that background evaluations were performed on over two million priests, deacons, seminarians, educators, employees and volunteers.

In a memo to all bishops and eparchs to accompany the audit report, Cardinal Francis George, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, highlighted efforts to keep children safe.

“The number of children now equipped with the skills to protect themselves more effectively continues to grow,” he said. “The *Charter* is causing a cultural change in the U.S. Catholic Church, one I hope will permeate all areas of society.”

He also cited the need for bishops to continue to reach out to victims of child sexual abuse.

“Of course, as bishops, we take the responsibility to reach out to victims/survivors and create safe environments seriously. The life and dignity of the victims/survivors and of little ones lie at the core of our responsibilities as shepherds,” he said.

A letter from Diane Knight, chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops National Review Board, to Cardinal George noted the need for vigilance and warned against complacency.

“There will always be human beings who are attracted to children, and children will therefore always be at risk,” cautioned Ms. Knight, a social worker with more than 40 years of experience.

“Our efforts to protect them have an impact beyond our own environs,” she added. “Our efforts are crucial to living out our Church’s commitment to the life and dignity of each and every human being.”

Keywords: Cardinal Francis George, Diane Knight, National Review Board, Charter for Protection of Children and Young People, child sexual abuse, National Review Board, U.S. bishops, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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