

Cardinal Maida Opening Remarks-- 06.04.02

Briefing on "Charter for Protection of Children and Young People."

At the core of the "Dallas Charter" on sexual abuse... in our archdiocesan policy on sexual misconduct as well... is a pledge to work for the safety and protection of children. It's truly as basic as that. What we do from this point forward is for the children. We do it in the name of the Church... we do it for the well being of our community... but we do it for the children. Before I answer your questions on the proposed Charter, I do want to speak for a moment on something that is happening here in southeast Michigan... something that is most troubling and tragic. It, too, involves children. 13 of them. 13 young people killed by gunfire since the first of the year. That's more than two young lives lost every month! At such a rate, should we be bracing for a long, and perhaps deadly, summer? I pray not! I pray not.

We cannot let these killings go unnoticed. We must do everything in our power... everything... to intervene... to save our children.

I am calling on our legislators and civic leaders... our prosecutors... and our law enforcement personnel... to re-double their efforts for this cause. But they can't do it alone. Everyone needs to step up: Parents and guardians... friends and neighbors... coaches and camp counselors. While I don't have answers right here-and-now myself... I do know that as brothers and sisters, as fellow citizens... we need to ask ourselves what can we do... and how can we do it. Our children are too precious a resource to squander to such unspeakable violence. I will do whatever I can as a Church and community leader to address this epidemic. And I am confident there are many who will join me. We can and will do this together... for the children.

Now, as to the "Dallas Charter." It's important to note that this is a working document. It can, and likely will, be amended. That being said, the Charter is a solid piece of work. It speaks to victims... to parents... to parishioners... and to clergy. For Church leaders, it's the beginning of a long and challenging road back to credibility- and transparency- on the sexual misconduct issue. I am confident we will get there! Among the provisions I heartily endorse... one that will keep Church leaders on task- here in Detroit and across the country- is the proposal for the Office for Child and Youth Protection at the U-S-C-C-B. That office will be charged with monitoring the efforts of dioceses across the country. It will publish an annual public report. I see this a tremendous resource, one that is both needed and necessary.

It's my observation that the question on how to deal with cases from the past is likely to be the one that prompts the most discussion and debate in Dallas. Whatever we adopt, I am firm in my belief that we cannot afford to be ambiguous about the standards we will apply. The Church public- and the greater community-needs to be assured that we are unequivocal in our pledge to... and I'm quoting the document here... "work to our utmost for the protection of children and youth."

(Open Up for Questions)