

BEAUMONT DIOCESE IN COMPLIANCE WITH USCCB CHARTER

The Diocese of Beaumont has once again received an "In Compliance" determination from Bill Gavin of The Gavin Group, Inc. The Office of Child and Youth Protection of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops contracted with the Gavin Group to carry out the audits again this year.

Auditors conducted a second on-site audit from Dec. 6-9, 2004, to evaluate how the Diocese of Beaumont is complying with the provisions of the USCCB "Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth." They reviewed policies and records, inspected documentation confirming implementation on the diocesan and the parish/school levels, verified that the "Ethical and Responsible Conduct Policies" are being distributed to employees and volunteers, that background checks are being conducted, and that clergy, employees and volunteers are attending the sexual abuse awareness training sessions. The auditors also interviewed a variety of persons both inside and outside the Church. They made on-site visits to two parishes to meet with the pastors and some of their staff so as to verify implementation of the Charter provisions on the parish/school level.

The documentation provided to the auditors also verified the following:

- 1) From October 2003 through Dec. 1, 2004, at least 69 Protecting God's Children sexual abuse awareness training sessions have been conducted in different locations throughout the diocese.
- 2) Attending these training sessions have been a total of 2,749 church personnel (clergy, employees, volunteers, seminarians and deacon candidates) and interested parents.
- 3) Building on the pro-active Character Education programs initiated in 2000 in our Catholic elementary schools, an age-appropriate Sexual Abuse Awareness & Prevention Program for Children was implemented in November 2004, with the kindergarten through third grades. The program for the upper grades is in the planning stage.
- 4) Training to equip parents to educate their children about this issue is also provided on the diocesan website (www.dioceseofbmt.org--Safe Environment/On-Line Training for Adults & Parents) and in the East Texas Catholic on the Safe Environment page.
- 5) A new parent-led child safety program, "Keeping Kids Safe," will be initiated in the fall of 2005 primarily with the students in the religious education classes in parishes but also with students in our Catholic schools.

In a letter given to Bishop Guillory during the exit interview, the two auditors stated, **"We also want to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership in the protection of children and youth within the ministry, programs, and services of the Diocese of Beaumont. It was evident during our previous audit, as it has been during this audit, that you have an affirmative, aggressive, and proactive personal commitment to a safe environment for the faithful within the Diocese."**

At the end of December 2004 Bishop Guillory received from Bill Gavin the Executive Summary of the findings of the audit. This Summary Report will be located on the Diocese of Beaumont website, on Bishop's Page, after the New Year. The last sentence of the Summary

states, **“At the conclusion of this compliance audit, the diocese was found to be compliant with all articles of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.”**

The Executive Summaries of all the dioceses will be published on the USCCB website in late February 2005 when the 2004 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter is released.

END

[Released Jan. 5, 2005 through the Office of Communications to the 3 local television stations, the 3 local newspapers (Beaumont, Port Arthur, Orange), and the Examiner. Also printed in the Jan. 14, 2005 issue of the *East Texas Catholic*.]