

April 2007

Dear People of God,

During the past four years a dedicated group within the diocese has worked to develop standards for protecting the young people in the church from sexual abuse. These policies along with the *Safeguarding God's Children* workshops help equip those people who are to be involved in the leadership and teaching of children and youth. Included are procedures for appropriate screening, clear standards of behavior of leaders, and effective training to recognize the signs that sexual misconduct has occurred, as well as the steps that should be taken when misconduct is suspected.

We expect all clergy, leaders, and teachers of children and youth to attend the *Safeguarding God's Children* certification workshop. This three-hour program is offered in deaneries throughout the year and will help people both see the need for these policies and discuss ways to implement them in your parish.

Enclosed is the *Best Practice Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth* (Policies for Protection). I want to emphasize that our efforts to protect our children and youth will be ongoing, and sadly never really finished. This is true both in the sense that our understanding of the evil of sexual misconduct broadens over time and in the sense that we hope to continuously improve the content of our training.

I commend to you these *Policies for Protection* and support each congregation enacting these policies and training their volunteers and paid staff for the safety of our children and youth.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Rev. Robert R. Gepert
VIII Western Michigan