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RISPOSTA DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLE "NORMS" REDATTE DALLA CONFERENZA DEI VESCOVI CATTOLICI DEGLI STATI UNITI D'AMERICA

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- LETTERA DEL CARDINALE PREFETTO DELLA CONGREGAZIONE PER I VESCOVI
- LETTERA DEL PRESIDENTE DELLA CONFERENZA DEI VESCOVI CATTOLICI DEGLI STATI UNITI

Pubblichiamo di seguito il testo della Lettera inviata dal Prefetto della Congregazione per i Vescovi, Em.mo Card. Giovanni Battista Re, al Presidente della Conferenza dei Vescovi Cattolici degli Stati Uniti, S.E. Mons. Wilton Daniel Gregory, in risposta alle "Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons or Other Church Personnel" ("*Norms*") redatte dai vescovi americani.

Pubblichiamo altresì la Lettera di risposta del Presidente della Conferenza dei Vescovi Cattolici degli Stati Uniti, S.E. Mons. Gregory:

- LETTERA DEL CARDINALE PREFETTO DELLA CONGREGAZIONE PER I VESCOVI

The Most Reverend Wilton D. GREGORY
President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Your Excellency,

With your letter of June 26, 2002, you forwarded to the Holy See the document entitled "Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons or Other Church Personnel" ("*Norms*"), approved at the Plenary Assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops which took place in Dallas (Texas) from June 13-15, and for which you requested the *recognitio*.

The Holy See, above all, would like to convey full solidarity with the Bishops of the United States in their firm

condemnation of sexual misdeeds against minors and is deeply concerned about the distressing situation that has arisen in recent months in the Church in the United States. Likewise, the Holy See wishes to encourage the efforts of the Episcopal Conference in assisting the Bishops to address these difficult problems.

The sexual abuse of minors is particularly abhorrent. Deeply moved by the sufferings of the victims and their families, the Holy See supports the American Bishops in their endeavor to respond firmly to the sexual misdeeds of the very small number of those who minister or labor in the service of the Church. But such a very small number cannot overshadow "the immense spiritual, human and social good that the vast majority of priests and religious in the United States have done and are still doing" (Pope John Paul II, Address to the Cardinals and to the Presidency of the Episcopal Conference of the United States, April 23, 2002).

The Apostolic See likewise acknowledges the efforts which the Bishops of the United States have made through the "*Norms*" and the guidelines contained in the "Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" ("*Charter*") to protect minors and to avoid future recurrences of these abuses. Such efforts should also help to preserve or restore the trust of the faithful in their pastors.

Despite these efforts, the application of the policies adopted at the Plenary Assembly in Dallas can be the source of confusion and ambiguity, because the "*Norms*" and "*Charter*" contain provisions which in some aspects are difficult to reconcile with the universal law of the Church. Moreover, the experience of the last few months has shown that the terminology of these documents is at times vague or imprecise and therefore difficult to interpret. Questions also remain concerning the concrete manner in which the procedures outlined in the "*Norms*" and "*Charter*" are to be applied in conjunction with the requirements of the Code of Canon Law and the *Motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* (AAS 93, 2001, p. 787).

For these reasons, it has been judged appropriate that before the *recognitio* can be granted, a further reflection on and revision of the "*Norms*" and the "*Charter*" are necessary. In order to facilitate this work, the Holy See proposes that a Mixed Commission be established, composed of four bishops chosen from the Episcopal Conference of the United States, and four representatives from those Dicasteries of the Holy See which have direct competence in the matter: the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for Bishops, the Congregation for Clergy, and the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts.

On behalf also of the other Dicasteries involved, I look forward to your response. With the promise of prayers for your important work in serving the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Giovanni Battista Card. Re
Prefect Congregation for Bishops

October 14, 2002

[01603-02.02] [Original text: English]

• LETTERA DEL PRESIDENTE DELLA CONFERENZA DEI VESCOVI CATTOLICI DEGLI STATI UNITI

His Eminence
Giovanni Battista Re
Prefect Congregation for Bishops

Your Eminence,

Thank you very much for your letter of October 14, 2002, in which you communicate to me the response of the Apostolic See to the request for *recognitio* by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for the *Norms* approved at our Plenary Assembly in Dallas, Texas, on June 14, 2002. The Bishops of the United States are

profoundly grateful to the Holy See, both for the fraternal solicitude that has been shown to the Church in the United States at this difficult time and for the gracious consideration that has been given to our request.

In view of the issues that Your Eminence raises in your letter to me regarding the best way for us to pursue effectively the *recognitio* of our proposed *Norms*, I am happy to accept, on behalf of our Episcopal Conference, the suggestion of the Apostolic See that a Mixed Commission be established in order to reflect further on and consider revision of certain aspects of the *Charter* accepted by the Bishops in Dallas and the *Norms* proposed to the Holy See for *recognitio*. I look forward to communicating to you in the very near future the names of the four Members of our Conference who will join four representatives from those Dicasteries of the Holy See that have direct competence in the matter before us.

Grateful to you, personally, Your Eminence, for your many kindnesses to our Conference, and with renewed sentiments of esteem and prayerful best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory
Bishop of Belleville
President

October 15, 2002

[01604-02.01] [Original text: English]
