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Diocese of Harrisburg Passes Annual Youth Protection Audit

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Diocese of Harrisburg has once again been found in compliance with the U.S. Bishops’ “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.” The annual audit was conducted in September by StoneBridge Business Partners, a Rochester, NY firm contracted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Diocese has passed this independent audit of its child protection procedures every year since the policy was adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002.

“The Stonebridge audit is an independent confirmation of the annual efforts the Diocese of Harrisburg takes to follow the Church’s rigorous youth protection standards, demonstrating our commitment to keeping all children in our care safe. I am grateful to our clergy, consecrated religious, staff and volunteers who work daily to ensure we have safe environments in our parishes, Catholic schools and all programs,” said Bishop Timothy Senior, Bishop of Harrisburg.

“I am grateful for the exemplary efforts that our clergy, staff, and volunteers make each day to keep our children safe as shown in the on-site audit results, and by their commitment to our Youth Protection Program, which is vital to the Church’s pledge to do everything in our power to protect children and vulnerable adults,” said Michelle Shae, Director of Safe Environment for the Diocese of Harrisburg.

StoneBridge Business Partners conducts the annual compliance audits of the nation’s 195 dioceses. This year, the Diocese of Harrisburg’s audit was in person with the audit team, which occurs every three years. As an onsite audit, in addition to providing written documents demonstrating our compliance with the Charter, the process also included interviews with Diocesan staff who work with our Safe Environment and Youth Protection programs, members of the Diocesan Review Board, select members of the clergy, and Bishop Senior. Site visits to randomly selected parishes and Catholic schools in the Diocese were also part of the audit process. During these visits, the auditors met with parish and school staff to review that location’s youth protection procedures. Some of the written information reported this year included:

- 12,786 students enrolled in Catholic schools in the Diocese or in parish religious education programs in the Diocese received Safe Environment training.

- 150 priests, along with 71 permanent deacons and 29 candidates for ordination (seminarians and candidates for the permanent diaconate) completed background checks and safe environment training.
- 836 educators and administrators in Diocesan Catholic schools, 1,812 employees of the Diocese or its parishes across fifteen counties and 7,855 volunteers at schools, parishes and Diocesan facilities have received training on how to keep children safe.

The Diocese of Harrisburg provided all the requested information to the auditors, which they confirmed to be complete in their final report. This annual audit evaluates each diocese's efforts to ensure the protection of children, including criminal background checks and educational awareness programs on recognizing and preventing abuse.

The Diocese of Harrisburg's Safe Environment Office ensures that Charter standards are continually met. For more information on the Diocese of Harrisburg's Safe Environment Program, visit www.youthprotectionhbg.com.

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The Diocese of Harrisburg was established on March 3, 1868. It has 97 parishes and missions, 35 Catholic schools, and is home to approximately 201,000 registered Catholics throughout its 15 counties. To learn more about the Diocese and its ministries, visit www.hbgdiocese.org.