



No. 002-2026

DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH

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Office of
THE DIOCESAN BISHOP

DECREE

DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

In Nomine Domini. Amen

Whereas, in the wake of the 2002 implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Diocese of Palm Beach established its safe environment training program in order to ensure proper training for all individuals who minister, work, or volunteer in any school, parish or other Diocesan entity including, clergy, employees, religious brothers and sisters, candidates for ordination, volunteers and independent contractors, and all those entrusted with the care, responsibility and supervision of minors. (Church Personnel). In keeping with the requirements of the aforementioned *Charter*, a background evaluation was also established.

Therefore, by virtue of my authority as diocesan bishop in accord with the USCCB *Charter* and the *Essential Norms* deriving from the *Charter*, as most recently revised in 2018, I hereby DECREE the following:

The Safe Environment Program for the Diocese of Palm Beach consists of the following component parts:

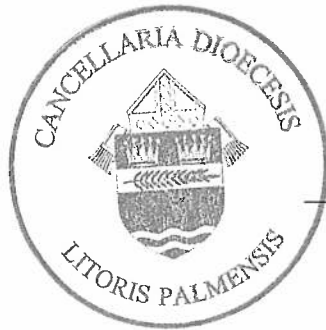
- All Church Personnel will be required to submit an FDLE Level II criminal background investigation. Eligibility for employment, volunteer work, or ministry will be contingent and conditioned upon a satisfactory background investigation. This background investigation will be updated every five (5) years. This policy applies even if an individual has been cleared through an FBI or FDLE check conducted by their employer or another non-diocesan entity.

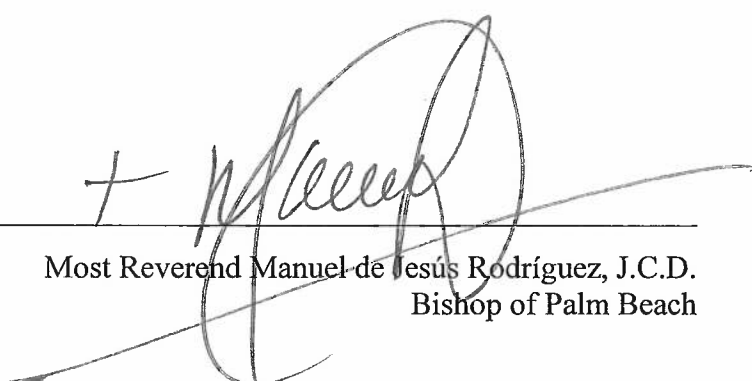
- All Church Personnel, including employees, independent contractors, and covered volunteers, are required to successfully complete safe environment training through the VIRTUS program, *Protecting God's Children*. This training must be renewed every five (5) years. Training must be completed prior to service. All employees are required to complete safe environment training upon hiring regardless of their contact with minors and vulnerable adults. Priests are also required to complete *Boundaries Awareness: Continuing Aspects of Human Formation for Clergy and Religious*.
- All Church Personnel who minister to vulnerable adults, including homebound, nursing home residents, hospital patients, or homeless are required to successfully complete VIRTUS' program, *Vulnerable Adults Training*.
- As part of its effort to protect all children from harm as well as to create safe environments in which children can learn and grow in faith, the Diocese of Palm Beach provides semi-annual safe environment training to all children enrolled in diocesan Catholic schools, parish religious education and youth ministry programs. There are three programs available for use: NCMEC's *Netsmartz*, *Kidsmartz*, dealing with internet and personal safety, and VIRTUS' *Teaching Safety – Empowering God's Children Program*, which teaches a sense of self-worth, essential God given human dignity and a respect for one's body as a gift from God. They should be used together as an integrated program.

This decree takes effect immediately upon notification and shall remain in force until abrogated or amended by me or my successors in the See of Palm Beach and supersedes all previous letters of promulgation.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained herein.

Issued and read, at Palm Beach Gardens, State of Florida, on the tenth (10th) day of the month of April, in the Year of the Lord two thousand and twenty-six (2026).




Most Reverend Manuel de Jesús Rodríguez, J.C.D.
Bishop of Palm Beach



Very Reverend Albert A. Dello Russo, J.C.L.
Chancellor