



Office of the Archbishop

ARCHDIOCESE  OF DENVER

1300 South Steele Street
Denver, CO 80210-2599
Phone: 303.715.3129
Fax: 303.715.2043

April 2, 2004

Justice Anne M. Burke
National Review Board for the Protection
Of Children and Young People
3211 Fourth Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20017-1194

BY FAX AND REGULAR MAIL

Dear Justice Burke:

We received a copy of your March 29 letter to Bishop Gregory. While you may have already heard from Bishop Gregory and other bishops, we'd like to respond directly.

The U.S. bishops have previously committed ourselves to a "Causes and Context Study." We doubt that any bishop seeks to delay that study unduly, because it makes very obvious sense. While the urgency of acting on the RFP before November is not clear to us, we support the NRB's recommendation if you believe the timing is critical.

We welcome an appropriate discussion of the matters you raise in your letter at our June meeting. However, please note that the June 2004 bishops' meeting is a quadrennial retreat. Its agenda already focuses on critical issues facing the Church. This in no way diminishes the continuing importance of the NRB, the Dallas Charter or issues relating to the sexual misconduct scandal. But neither can we as bishops neglect other vital matters, including calls for a plenary council.

Our problems with your letter lie elsewhere.

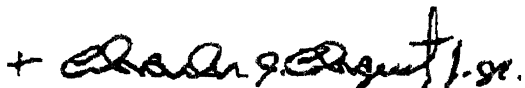
The matter of "fraternal correction" among bishops has canonical implications that go well beyond the NRB's competence. We understand and support your concern about right behavior among the bishops. Given your own legal background, however, we're surprised that you would seek to hurry a matter that directly involves Church law. Allow us also to point out that the Charter requires an annual national report on compliance. It nowhere requires an annual national audit and the expense, staff and structures that would involve. We do not necessarily oppose such an audit. We do think it would make more sense on a triennial or quadrennial basis. In any case, it is not the NRB's duty to interpret the

Charter. The NRB is an important advisory body at the service of the bishops. It does not and cannot have supervisory authority.

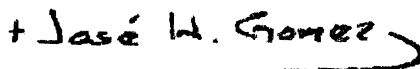
Finally, Justice Burke, we were embarrassed by the tone of your letter. It assumes the worst motives on the part of the bishops, despite the progress that has already been made. Your language is designed to offend and contains implicit threats that are, to put it mildly, inappropriate for anyone of your professional stature. Whatever its goals, your letter diminishes the credibility of the NRB and invites resistance. We can't imagine that this is what you intended.

Be assured of our good will and prayers nonetheless. You can also count on our taking this matter with the gravity it deserves, whether we agree with you on specific recommendations or not.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput, O. F. M. Cap.
Archbishop of Denver

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Most Rev. José H. Gomez, S.T.D.
Auxiliary Bishop of Denver

Cc: Most Rev. Wilton Gregory, president
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops