



DIocese OF YOUNGSTOWN

David J. Bonnar

By the Grace of God and the Apostolic See

BISHOP OF YOUNGSTOWN

DECREE

Whereas, we the Roman Catholic Diocese of Youngstown have a sacred obligation to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults, the curricula of our Catholic schools and religious education programs, intended to supplement the requirements of the State of Ohio, already contain learning objectives to protect children from abuse, while also stressing the teachings of the Gospel with respect to human sexuality and morality.

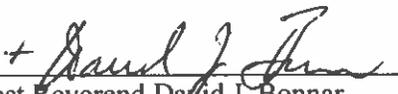
Whereas, at the conclusion of the 2023 StoneBridge onsite audit, the auditors recommended that the diocese consider adopting a standardized safe environment program for children and young people across all our schools and parish religious education programs.

Whereas, in response to this recommendation the diocese began a process of consultation with neighboring dioceses and a review of multiple programs to ensure that this new initiative would be in accordance with best practices and only strengthen our commitment to safeguarding and to fulfilling Article 12 of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

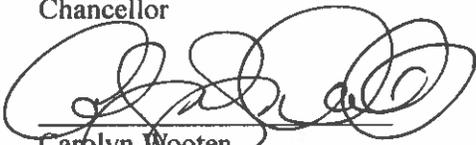
Whereas, the VIRTUS *Empowering God's Children*® program is a comprehensive curriculum that educates children and young people about boundaries, safe and unsafe behaviors, and healthy relationships, and the material is developmentally appropriate for each age group and is in line with Catholic theology and teachings.

Therefore, I decree that all the schools and parish religious education programs in the Diocese of Youngstown shall adopt and implement the VIRTUS *Empowering God's Children*® annual training program for all children and young people, effective immediately.

Given at the Diocese of Youngstown Chancery Office on this 19th day of February 2026.


Most Reverend David J. Bonnar
Bishop of Youngstown


Joan Lawson
Chancellor


Carolyn Wooten
Notary

