



DIOCESE OF AMARILLO

Office of the Bishop

January 17, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In late January 2019, the Diocese of Amarillo will release the names of all confirmed cases of Clergy Abuse of Minors. The upcoming list is comprehensive and up-to-date. As your Bishop, I want to reassure you we are doing all we can to protect the children in our parishes and educate all parishioners to be vigilant and to be "quick-responders" by reporting any suspected sexual misconduct of minors by any member of our clergy, staff, volunteers or members of our congregations to local authorities as soon as possible. We are all encouraged to follow the Safe Environment Training message that instructs us "Telling makes it Stop" in order to immediately report abuse and stop further abuse. Protecting our children and minors is our number one responsibility and priority.

This matter is of grave importance to each of us. My deepest empathy and desire for healing and consolation goes out to the people of God who are suffering because of the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. I want to sincerely extend my deepest sorrow to all victims of such abuse. In addition, I want to offer you a message of hope that as a Church we are committed to a "No Tolerance" Policy dictated by our "Charter for the Protection of Children and Minors."

In our efforts to insure that our churches are safe, we have published the name and contact information of the Diocese Victim Assistance Coordinator, Sharyn Delgado for anyone needing to report clergy abuse or abuse by anyone associated with the Diocese. We are regularly audited to confirm that as a Diocese we are providing training on Child Sexual Abuse and Safe Environments and have on staff a Safe Environment Director, Deacon Blaine Westlake. In his capacity, he runs regular Criminal Background Checks on all those who have direct contact with our parish children. Our parish priests are also trained annually on all aspects of the Safe Environment Policies. The Safe Environment that is required of all who work with children and minors has truly made a difference in our ecclesial life. Many of the cases are decades old and there has only been one alleged sexual abuse of a minor since the date of implementation of the Charter in 2001.

We have a volunteer Diocesan Review Board led by Chairperson, Louise Ross, to review and evaluate the outcome of our Safe Environment Training Programs, as well as receive and review any and all complaints of sexual misconduct towards children and minors by any clergy or parish member. This Review Board serves as the lay accountability for checks and balances component to maintain the highest standard of safety and reporting procedures for the entire Diocese. Most importantly, all those living clergy who have offended children have been permanently removed from ministry.

Shortly after I arrived to assume my ministry among you, each parish participated in the "Healing of Memory Prayer Service" that took place during the Mass. It acknowledged the pain of victims, prayed for their recovery and begged for God's forgiveness and that of the victims. We as Church have continued to pray for the victims and an end to this plague that has afflicted our Church and our culture.

As part of the Church, we all belong to the Mystical Body of Christ; we are the Body and Christ is our head. As Church let us each, clergy and laity, take responsibility for its future and ensure that it is safe for all. Let us take care of our priests and support them emotionally and spiritually in their ministry that they always may be healthy and wholesome. Above all let each of us stay educated and alert concerning the safety and well-being of each and every child.

For all those wounded and abused children who are now adults, I am deeply sorry for the damage and injury that you experienced by any priest. I pray daily for all victims and for your families. I will continue to pray for you and ask that God's merciful and compassionate love would bring you healing and joy of life. As you experienced the passion of the Cross, may you also experience the Resurrection and the newness of life that it also manifests. We have available counseling and assistance. You may contact Mrs. Delgado should you need help with this matter.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

✠ Most Reverend Patrick J. Zurek
Bishop of Amarillo