



# Saint Paschal Baylon Catholic School

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Monday, October 1, 2018

*Pastoral Letter 5 - 2018*

*Memorial of Saint Therese of Lisieux*

Dear Parents/Guardians - Friends in the Body of Christ:

Last week at our School Advisory Council (SAC) meeting, that included Principal Raguz, we discussed the recent repeat of news about the abuse crisis in the church. I know that you may have heard me discuss this topic in a homily or two, heard the intercessions at Mass, attended our special Taizé Prayer service praying for victims, or had conversations of your own with family and friends. We certainly hope that this issue does not hold anyone from worship or participating in the life of our parish or the diocesan church.

Specifically, the SAC felt it might be beneficial for me to outline our current practices - and what we as a parish and diocese have done since 2002 to comply with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Charter to Protect Youth People and Enforce Safe Environments for all God's People." As you may recall, the church became the leader with this issue following much pain and suffering - a special model outlined by experts working with the bishops. Each parish and diocese is required to follow a very specific protocol:

- Mrs. Karen Lipstreu, our school administrative assistant, is the administrator of our parish records and the liaison with the diocesan office of compliance. She, along with Principal Raguz and Business Manager Michelle Mazza, are our "team," so that if there were to be an issue, they would administer the process to investigate the staff or volunteer that may be in violation. They would bring information to our local police and the diocese, depending on the case.
- All paid staff members and volunteers receive a background check, fingerprinting and take the national Virtus training to be certified. We appreciate the staff and volunteers who contribute to the parish's life by paying for their background checks. For our teachers, this is in addition to other certification that they need.
- Each month, staff and volunteers receive a monthly "continuing education piece" from Virtus that keeps us certified to minister with youth.
- Mrs. Lipstreu monitors to insure that folks comply and reports annually to the diocese.
- Our diocesan reports are shared with the national task force that monitors the church.
- SPB has not had any issues with anyone complying.

Attorney generals from several states, first in Pennsylvania, and soon in other states or commonwealths, are revealing some new information (that was disclosed when mandated) and re-reporting cases from 70 years or so, before 2002. Most dioceses shared this information when

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it first occurred, for such was the case of our diocese in 1985 and 1986. Periodically, our diocese gives a status report. These were published in the former newspaper, *Catholic Universe Bulletin*. Now information is shared in the *Northeast Ohio Catholic* magazine or weekly e-newsletter/email from the diocese on Thursdays. Our diocesan communication office also shares press releases to local media regularly; the media choose what they will cover and many items are not made known, including with this topic, in our local news coverage. (Bishop Perez released a statement in August and this was on the diocesan website; we carried it in our parish bulletin.)

We know that the media and attorney generals and victims continue to seek justice and healing. We pray for this and hope that this issue will not renew hurts or pain that may be part of your own past. If so, please know that Fr. John or I, or others on our pastoral staff, are happy to spend time with you to talk and pray with you. Secondly, please encourage others to know our diocesan and parish process so that they may know and continue to support the church's ministry, or do what they need to participate in the worship and ministry of our parish's life. We do not wish for this issue to keep folks from being part of our church.

We are the Body of Christ. When one of our members hurt, we all do. Let us continue to pray for one another, especially those continuing to endure pain and suffering from this issue. Let us build a healing community, together journeying forward in faith, hope and love.

In Christ our Eucharist,

Reverend John Thomas Lane, SSS, '79  
Pastor