



December 2020

Dear Friends in Christ:

Today the great challenge to our faith and our mission as a diocese remains the sexual abuse scandal. The wounds of this crisis continue to reverberate locally, nationally, and across the globe. Our mission as a diocese is to continue to catechize, sanctify and serve the People of God in the North Country. At the same time, we will continue to reach out to victims of abuse in a way that helps to bring about reconciliation and healing for those who have been so terribly hurt by Church leaders.

Our diocese has been addressing the sexual abuse scandal for decades in a serious and determined manner. Over the past several years, we have instituted policies and procedures to prevent sexual abuse from happening. The procedures ensure that allegations are responsibly and justly handled when they are received. They call for pastoral outreach to victims who have been harmed by this evil.

Those who have suffered such abuse are encouraged to contact our Victim's Assistance Coordinator, Terrianne Yanulavich, Ph.D., MHT at (518) 651-2267 (days) or (518) 569-0612 (evenings); terrianneyanulavich@yahoo.com. Dr. Yanulavich will assist with the healing process. To ensure that justice is served, all allegations are automatically reported by the Church to local authorities. Victims are also encouraged to notify the local authorities of the allegation.

Mr. John Morrison, our Safe Environment Director and Charter Compliance Coordinator, works with our parishes, Catholic Schools, and other entities, to ensure that the national and diocesan policies to establish safe environments are fully implemented. Our policies are reviewed and revised as necessary so that we continue to offer the best possible protection for our children. Last year we added a section to the existing policy that addresses the procedure for one to follow in reporting allegations against the diocesan bishop.

Each year we are independently audited to determine compliance with the national and diocesan policies. In December of 2020, the diocese received a letter from the auditing firm indicating that the diocese was fully compliant with the provisions outlined in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. While the diocese has maintained an excellent track record of compliance in these audits, we must not become complacent. We remain fully committed and dedicated to creating a culture of safety and trust.

Clearly this is the work of many individuals and I am grateful to all those employees and volunteers who assist with the implementation of our Safe Environment programs. By working cooperatively together, we can keep the promise to protect and the pledge to heal. Please review the information presented in these pages.

With a Shepherd's care and concern,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg