



2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

Throughout the history of the Church, we have faced many scandals that have caused considerable pain and anguish to both those inside and outside of its fold. The clergy sexual abuse scandal in all its various iterations, has created a tremendous challenge to the Church. It is often cited as one of the leading reasons why people are leaving the Church or abandoning religion altogether.

While some concrete steps have been taken to begin redressing past injustices, our diocese continues its mission to bring about reconciliation and healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse at the hands of clergy. We are truly committed to fostering safe environments in all parishes, Catholic schools, and other diocesan institutions. We have put policies and procedures in place to prevent any recurrence of this plague in the future.

All of those who have been harmed by Church leaders deserve pastoral care to help guide their healing journey. To that end, the Diocese encourages those who have suffered abuse to contact our Victim Assistance Coordinator, Terriane Yanulavich, Ph.D., LMHC, at (518) 358-3145 Ext. 7179 (days) or (518) 569-0612 (evenings). Dr. Yanulavich will assist with the intake and healing process. In furtherance of justice, all allegations are automatically reported by Church personnel to local authorities, including law enforcement. Victim/survivors are also encouraged to contact local authorities regarding the allegation.

Our Safe Environment Office, under the direction of Mr. John Morrison, works diligently with leaders in our parishes, Catholic schools, and other entities to fulfill the mandates of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Mr. Morrison is charged with overseeing the implementation of national and diocesan policies aimed at maintaining safe environments for all minors and vulnerable adults in our diocese. Future revisions to the *Charter* or related documents must be addressed in updated and revised diocesan policies so that we continue to offer the best possible protection to those who are entrusted to our care.

This year the diocese will have an independent, on-site audit to determine compliance with national policies outlined in the *Charter*. While the diocese has established an exemplary track record of compliance during past audits, it will not rest on these laurels. We remain fully committed and dedicated to creating an enduring culture of safety and trust.

I am grateful to all clergy, employees, and volunteers who play a role in the implementation of our Safe Environment programs. Our promise to protect and our pledge to heal is the guiding principle leading our actions now and in the future.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley  
Bishop of Ogdensburg