



Diocese of Fall River
Office of the Bishop
Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

August 21, 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

Early this week, Pope Francis issued a "Letter to the People of God" in which he acknowledged "the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons."

I am grateful for the Pope's impassioned response at this time. As you know, this very painful issue has once again come to the forefront of our Church, and all of us are shaken by it.

Revelations about now former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and his subsequent removal from public ministry and the report of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury profoundly sadden and disturb me.

I know that many of you feel the same way. I realize the anguish this has brought to our faithful parishioners in the Diocese. Understandably, you are upset, disillusioned and even angry.

As Bishop of Fall River, I want to reiterate my firm, unequivocal commitment to doing all in my ability to ensure that a culture of safe environment permeates all ministries and programs offered by this Diocese especially those that serve our children and young people.

In the spring, we established a separate, stand-alone Office of Safe Environment to oversee our child protection protocols and programs and hired two former law enforcement officials to oversee them. These changes, and others made thus far to our abuse prevention training program and CORI procedures, have strengthened our efforts in these areas. A predominantly lay Review Board, in place to serve as an advisory body in matters of sexual misconduct, has already begun a review of our policies on abuse prevention and response to ensure their optimum effectiveness. To access these policies and procedures and all related documents, please visit the diocesan website at <http://www.fallriverdiocese.org/> and click on the Safe Environment tab at the top of the homepage.

Pope Francis writes in his letter of the urgency to reaffirm the Church's commitment to ensure the protection of minor and vulnerable adults, "...no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated." You have my promise that I will do all that I am able to uphold this commitment here in the Fall River Diocese.

With regard to the wider Church, I was pleased to learn last week that the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has announced a series of steps designed to implement stronger protections against predators in the Church and anyone who would conceal them, protections that will hold bishops to the highest standards of transparency and accountability. Know that I firmly support such steps.

In closing, let me assure you of my prayers at this difficult time. At the same time, I ask that you please join your prayers with mine for the eradication of all forms of sexual abuse and especially for those who have been victims of abuse in our Church, that they may find healing and comfort and the necessary strength for rebuilding their lives.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

Bishop of Fall River

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