



April 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. This is a time to recognize the importance of collaboration and community efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect, the most common form of abuse. It is also a time to educate yourself on how to recognize and report abuse so minors and others who are vulnerable are better protected. Everyone has a role to play in helping to prevent child abuse and promoting healthy, safe communities.

Our diocese places the utmost importance on its mission to bring about reconciliation and healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse at the hands of clergy and other Church personnel. We have put policies and procedures in place to prevent any recurrence of this plague in the future. We remain fully committed and dedicated to creating an enduring culture of safety and trust in all parishes, Catholic Schools, and other diocesan entities.

Those who have been harmed by Church leaders deserve pastoral care to help guide their healing journey. The first step in that process is 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. 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.

Mr. John Morrison heads our diocesan Safe Environment Office. He oversees the implementation of national and diocesan policies aimed at maintaining safe environments for all minors and vulnerable adults in our diocese. Mr. Morrison works cooperatively 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*. We are grateful for his tireless efforts.

This year the diocese will have an independent, on-site audit to determine compliance with national policies outlined in the *Charter*. While our diocese has established an exemplary track record of compliance during past audits, we will not rest on these laurels.

The success of our efforts to date speak to the energy and dedication of everyone involved - clergy, employees, and volunteers. It also establishes a strong foundation for safeguarding efforts to build upon, both in terms of the information gathered as well as the collaborative culture of safety we are building. Our promise to protect and our pledge to heal is the guiding principle leading our actions now and in the future.

With a Shepherd's care and concern,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Terry R. LaValley'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley  
Bishop of Ogdensburg