

✝ Diocesan Safe Environment Efforts

“Pope Francis sets the stage. ... Like a ‘Loving Mother,’ he observes, the church protects with a special affection the small and weak because Christ has entrusted this task to the whole church. This task is not just the pope’s will, or a pragmatic response to a crisis. Rather it is what Christ wants his church to do day in and day out. Protecting these little ones is a matter of our faith in Christ”. (AMERICA MAGAZINE, *To Love and Protect*, June 22, 2016, Blasé J. Cupich) There is much good news to share.

Locally, the Diocese of Duluth has focused on three goals:

1. Healing of survivors;
2. Holding accountable those clergy who have offended;
3. Creating a culture of safety.

Actions have included:

1. Had a Sexual Misconduct Policy in place, since 1992
2. Required compliance with Diocesan Sexual Misconduct policies and Code of Conduct for over 3000 clergy, church employees and volunteers who work with children, since 1992
3. Conducted background checks on adults who work with children, currently over 2500 active volunteers, since 1993
4. Implemented the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, since 2002
5. Participated in an annual audit and been found in compliance every year since, since 2004
6. Published information on how to report abuse to civil and church authorities, since 2005
7. Annually provided safety training to over 4000 children in our religious education programs and our Catholic schools, since 2006
8. Published the names of clergy credibly accused of sexual misconduct, since 2013
9. Identified safe environment coordinators in every parish and Catholic school, since 2015

In addition the Diocese has:

- Removed from ministry clergy who have been credibly accused of sexual misconduct
- Met with victims of abuse
- Provided ongoing support to victims and families
- Publically apologized for the sexual abuse that occurred
- Offered healing services for faith communities hurt by the actions of clergy
- Required in depth psycho-social evaluation of seminary candidates
- Required annual evaluation of each seminarian in the areas of Human, Spiritual, Intellectual, and Pastoral formation.

In learning from the past we have seen this as an opportunity to not just fulfill safe environment “requirements” but to take a leading role in building a “culture of safety” both within and outside the boundaries of the church. We want to build a culture in which every child’s dignity is respected and protected and in which the voice of a child is heard and responded to by all those responsible for their care.

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