



DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The month of April has been designated as *National Child Abuse Prevention Month*. During this month, we call particular attention to the responsibility that we all share to protect children, and all who are vulnerable among us, from any abuse. At the same time, we renew our commitment to do all that we can to accompany and to assist survivors of abuse as they seek healing and peace.

While the sexual abuse of even just one child is an unspeakable evil, the *National Children's Alliance* reports that more than 600,000 children are sexually abused each year in the United States, with 28 percent of the victims under the age of two. In most cases, the perpetrators of sexual abuse of children are trusted adults known to the family, and sometimes, even family members.

Once again, I acknowledge that within the Catholic Church, the "trusted adults" who were guilty of these unspeakable sins were members of the clergy, or others working in the Church. From the time that the sexual abuse scandal came to light, the Catholic Church has worked diligently to ensure that children and young people will be protected while in our care. Assuring that our parishes and institutions are truly safe environments for children has been, and must *always* be, a major priority for our Diocese. So, not only during the month of April, but throughout the year, we renew our resolve to do all that we can to prevent child abuse.

This past year in the Diocese of Harrisburg, more than 10,700 clergy, educators, administrators, and volunteers completed extensive background checks and training to work with our youth. Training adults is just one piece of our youth protection efforts. Over 12,700 students in our various youth programs and Catholic schools received Safe Environment training, teaching them the warning signs of safe and unsafe situations. Our offices of Youth Protection, Safe Environment and Victim Assistance continue to work with parish, school, and youth related ministry staff to ensure training and prevention procedures are followed. All dioceses in the United States are required to undergo an annual audit of its compliance with child protection measures, and the appropriate handling of any allegation of abuse. I am deeply grateful for these dedicated members of our faith community, who work in partnership with me to ensure that we provide a safe environment for the children, youth, and vulnerable adults who worship in our parishes and are active in our various programs and ministries.

Please join me in prayer for the protection of all children and the most vulnerable. May God bless our work to do all we can to protect every child, and to prevent child abuse, especially those in our care. Pray also that all those who have been abused or affected by abuse may find healing and peace.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior  
Bishop of Harrisburg

*The Diocese of Harrisburg encourages anyone aware of misconduct or abuse by any person affiliated with the Diocese to report it to Child Line at 1-800-932-0313, to contact local law enforcement and the Diocese by calling 1-800-626-1608.*