



October 4, 2018

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

You are precious because you are created by God for God! Because of our relationship through, with and in God, we receive a sacred dignity which we are each called to honor through all our lives. That is why you and I are committed to flourishing the well-being of all God's people. For me personally, it is especially important to keep safe our vulnerable populations. Our Diocese of Orlando Safe Environment Policy was created for this purpose.

I come to you today as your Shepherd, to share that I have learned Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, will be conducting an investigation into the policies, procedures, and practices that have long been in place in the Diocese of Orlando to protect against child and vulnerable adult abuse and to investigate allegations of misconduct. The other dioceses in the state will face similar investigations.

I have assured the statewide prosecutor working on this matter that we are committed to cooperating in any investigation the Florida Attorney General may pursue.

Among other things we have shared and will share with the statewide prosecutor are the following:

- In 1995, the Diocese of Orlando created a Lay Review Board to oversee policy creation and review allegations of sexual misconduct.
- In 1997, the Diocese of Orlando began Safe Environment Training and the fingerprinting of clergy, religious, lay staff and volunteers.
- Our policy dictates that when we are informed of an allegation of abuse, we follow Florida law.
- When a credible allegation of sexual abuse by any Church Personnel is received, the individual is removed from ministry, volunteer activity, or employment.
- The Diocese of Orlando is audited annually by an independent auditor to assure our safe environment practices are followed.

These are just a few examples of the policies and practices in effect in our diocese. I know that each one of you understands and respects the dignity of the human person, whose defense and promotion have been entrusted to us by God our Creator. My prayer is that the Attorney General will agree that we all have met our commitments to safeguard the most vulnerable among us.

As Christ is beside me, before me, I pray for your forgiveness for the wrongdoing that you may have experienced at the hands of someone within the Church, whether bishop, priest, religious or lay. We ask those who have been harmed to take courage and come forward because we will listen.

Here are some current resources for reporting:

Victim Reporting (past abuse): <http://myfloridalegal.com/stopabuse>

DCF Hotline (for current abuse): 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)

Victim Assistance Coordinator: Randy Means, 407-246-7179

During our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Diocese of Orlando, we call upon the intercession of Mary, Mother of God, our patroness and example of God's mercy.

Mary, Mother of the Church,  
we stand before you  
shaken by the scandal and division  
in the Church that we love.  
We pray for victims of abuse,  
whose trust was betrayed  
and whose innocence was shattered  
by members of the clergy.  
We pray for those whose suffering was ignored  
and for those who were silenced or disbelieved.  
We pray for Church leaders,  
that by putting the needs of the vulnerable first,  
by acting with transparency,  
and by always holding themselves  
accountable to God and to the People of God  
they may regain the trust that has been broken.  
We pray for ourselves,  
that the darkness and confusion we feel  
may give way to light.  
May we find the way to justice, unity, healing, and hope,  
through your Son, Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Mary, refuge of sinners, pray for us.  
Mary, comfort of the troubled, pray for us.  
Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Noonan", with a cross symbol to the left.

Most Reverend John Noonan  
Bishop of Orlando