



Safe Environment

Diocese of Wheeling - Charleston

Spring 2020

Bishop Announces Additional Safety Measures

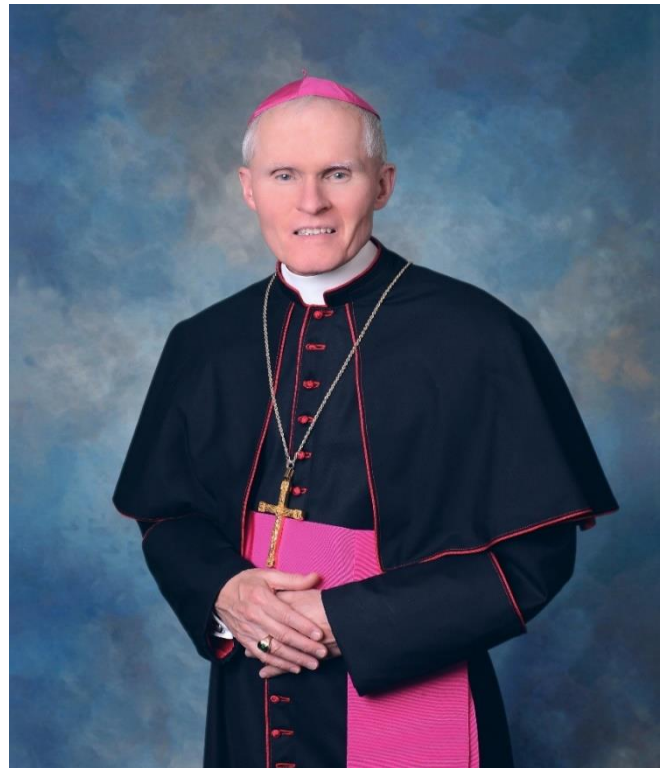
Editor's Note: *Greetings from the Chancery and here's wishing you all a happy, healthy, warm, and sunny spring! There are some new initiatives coming together as a result of Bishop Mark Brennan's commitment to creating a culture of safety throughout our diocese. The announcement he recently released is a powerful testament of his resolve to ensure our protection. Here is the text of Bishop Mark Brennan's letter dated 20 February 2020 and announcing the additional initiatives:*

Dear Pastors, Administrators and Principals of Catholic Schools:

Today I write to you with hope and confidence that the efforts to establish a culture of safety and awareness in our Diocese continue to move forward in significant ways. In addition to our long-standing Safe Environment program, the Diocese has worked for several months on the implementation of a third-party reporting system called Ethics Point, which is nearing completion; the expansion of various lay boards and implementation of policies designed to provide necessary stewardship of Church resources; the establishment of a victims assistance fund, which was recently created; and the continuation of robustly encouraging the reporting of abuse to civil authorities, first and foremost.

As we continue to grow this kind of culture in our parishes, schools, and ministry programs, the Diocese has engaged a third-party service provider, Corporate Security and Investigations (CSI), based in Monaca, Pennsylvania, to assist us in some key areas. CSI is an organization comprised of experienced professionals from law enforcement, public safety, academia, and the private sector, who specialize in various services including fingerprinting, background checks, investigations, risk management, and training. CSI has been helping entities reduce risk since its founding in 1988 and presently also assists the Diocese of Pittsburgh, among many other organizations in private industry.

Along these lines and upon my direction, the Diocese has been researching best practices nationwide for growing a culture of safety and awareness. As a result, I am implementing some additional and specific checks and balances, with the help of CSI, that I hope will give the people of our Diocese comfort and reassurance as they continue to worship, volunteer, and work throughout our great state. As is common knowledge, our Diocesan Safe Environment program has been in place since 2002, when the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was implemented by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Our Diocesan Safe Environment protocol includes completion of sex abuse awareness training, completion of background screenings, and receipt and review of our Sex Abuse Policy for all employees and volunteers who work directly or indirectly with children. Expanding on this already-robust program and beginning this month, I am requiring the following additional protocols to help promote safety and reduce risk:



Fingerprinting as a Background Check

Fingerprinting will be required for the bishop, all priests and deacons; all seminarians; and all Catholic school teachers, principals, staff and certain volunteers. Fingerprints will be submitted to and housed with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which will run background checks. Fingerprints will not be kept by schools or the Diocese.

Safe Environment spot checks

The Diocese is audited on-site every three years by the USCCB's independent third-party auditing firm for compliance with Safe Environment protocol. Beginning in 2020, representatives from CSI will visit parishes and schools to perform more frequent and regular spot checks to ensure compliance, accuracy, and consistency at the local level.

Site Assessments

Recently, the Diocese has received several requests from parishes and schools seeking guidance on how to better protect their people, buildings, and properties. CSI offers subject matter experts who can assess and evaluate site security and offer practical recommendations to enhance safety. Our preliminary plan is to accomplish these assessments by regions and couple them with fingerprinting and Safe Environment spot checks. If you already have a site security plan, CSI will review and make suggestions to strengthen it.

Training

Last but certainly not least, the Diocese, through CSI's experts, will offer training on safety, de-escalation, and harassment for professional staff. Our hope is that such instruction raises awareness and offers knowledge and effective tools to help navigate potentially difficult situations in our schools, parishes and Diocesan offices. More information will be shared on training opportunities in the months ahead. It is my sincerest hope that the implementation of these measures, coupled with those upon which we already have embarked, will continue to illustrate our commitment to growing the culture of safety we all want to provide. I ask that you assist me in implementing these programs with a missionary spirit, your prayerful support and, of course, steadfast patience.

Faithfully in Christ,

† Mark E. Brennan

Most Rev. Mark E. Brennan Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

Myths About Clergy Abuse in the Catholic Church

By Sharon Doty, J.D., M.H.R.



Evidence-based research provides a solid foundation for facilitators (of VIRTUS sex abuse awareness training) by offering sound, verifiable data to counter these types of common assertions.¹ Separating the myths from the facts will help facilitators to speak more confidently about clergy questions that arise in the training sessions.

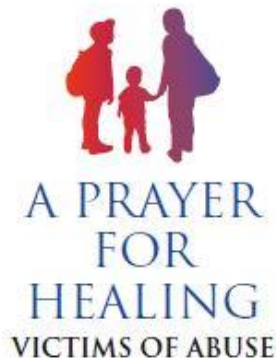
Myth: It is more common for Catholic priests to be abusers (than other groups of males).

The media attention to the problems in the Catholic church have left many with the opinion and/or impression that the problem of child sexual abuse is greater among Catholic clergy. But, the research shows this is not the case—and that during similar time periods, they abuse at the same rate as other groups of males.

According to the comprehensive review of clergy personnel files that was the basis of the original John Jay Study, approximately four percent of Catholic priests had credible allegations of child sexual abuse against them over a period of 50 years. Although no other group of men, i.e., coaches, teachers,

parents, etc., have been studied in the exact same way, a U.S. Department of Education study found that six percent of teachers from public schools also had credible claims of child sexual abuse. Another study, completed before the John Jay Study, indicated that between 3 and 5 percent of the male population meet the diagnostic criteria for pedophilia. While suffering from pedophilia is clearly different from acting in such a way that abuses children, those numbers increase substantially when including men who sexually abuse teens.²

Even a review of insurance claims for child sexual abuse shows that there is no difference in the numbers between Catholic and non-Catholic groups of men.³



Holy Spirit, comforter
of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness
into wholeness.
Grant us the courage
and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act
with justice.
Breathe wisdom into our
prayers and labors.
Grant that all harmed by
abuse may find peace
in justice.
We ask this through
Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

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Myth: Child sexual abuse by Catholic clergy is common today.

In the 1970s, there was an average of 660 cases in the Church; whereas just after the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Charter) was adopted, that average reduced to twelve per year. Since 2014, there has been approximately one new case a year.⁴ This, of course, does not make the fact that children were abused any better. But, if you listen to the media, it seems as though the problem of child sexual abuse by Catholic priests is still as common of an occurrence today. Rarely does a newspaper article fully explain that the cases that are being discussed now (and that have been disclosed relatively recently) occurred decades ago. However, even the recent report by the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Grand Jury admitted that there had only been two credible allegations against priests in the diocese since the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Charter) was adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002.⁵ The report also noted that both of those cases were handled appropriately and consistently with the law in Pennsylvania.⁶

While it is impossible to promise that there will never be another priest molesting children, it is clear that the work done by each Diocese per the implementation of the Charter has had a profound and lasting impact on the issue in the Catholic Church.

Myth: Most priest offenders molested hundreds of children.

There are those in the Church's history who are guilty of harming hundreds of children by committing these heinous acts. Fr. John Geoghan, Fr. James Porter and Fr. Gilbert Gauthe are among the most notorious of these types of serial offenders. However, while prominent, these cases are not representative of all the allegations against clergy over the years. In fact, as previously stated, approximately four percent of the 109,694 priests and religious serving in parish ministry over the past 50 years had credible allegations of child sexual abuse against them (4,392). These allegations number 11,404 in total. However, 149 of those priests and religious accounted for 26 percent of the total allegations.⁷ These were the serial offenders. This minority found their way into the priesthood and took advantage of the trusting nature of the faithful and the opportunity of access to young boys to satisfy their own personal sexual wants. The Catholic Church is not a "safe harbor" for serial offenders. The legacy of pain left by these men is not something we will ever "get over." It is clear, however; that the Church is on the way to assuring that nothing like this ever happens again.

Myth: There have been fewer reports of child sexual abuse by clergy in recent years simply because of the time it takes for victims to come forward (decades).

We live in a very different time now than the 1960s-1980s, when most of the reported abuse occurred. The children who were molested by clergy during that time had no real recourse or avenue for reporting. The child protection system we know today was not established until Congress adopted a law establishing this system in 1974,⁸ which was the first time states were required to create child protection units to investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect. Just 40 years ago, there was no system dedicated to the protection of children from abuse. Even then, with what was investigated, the emphasis was on physical abuse. Neglect and the sexual abuse of children was not the focus of the old legislation.

In addition, there was a cultural reluctance to come forward during that timeframe, and, sadly, some good reasons to keep quiet. First and foremost, people simply did not believe children's reports of abuse, particularly when they were accusing a family member, a priest, a coach, or another respected adult member of the community. In recent years, this has changed. Child protection services and law enforcement are aware that fewer than 5 percent of allegations by children are deliberately false and a large percentage of those arise in custody cases,⁹ and so, people are more willing to listen to a child's disclosure and report it. Today, all states have laws that mandate reporting and many require all citizens to come forward and allow children to make allegations.

Myth: All cases of child abuse against the Church involve lies.

We know that most children are not lying when they disclose child sexual abuse. However, it is also the case that not all cases of allegations of child sexual abuse made by adults against clergy are supported by the facts. While most reports are sincere and true, unfortunately, other psychological and psychiatric issues can promote hallucinations and delusions that unfortunately leave people with distorted memories that cannot be corroborated with known evidence. There are also some people who are greatly influenced or manipulated by therapists, lawyers and others to report intentionally false allegations for purposes of securing money or revenge for a perceived wrong. Two high profile examples of false allegations were those made against Cardinal Bernadine in Chicago and Cardinal Mahoney in Los Angeles. After careful investigation, it was determined that both these claims were entirely false.

As we have seen recently, Bishops and Cardinals and other high-ranking Church officials have hidden their own crimes of abuse. Given all these situations, it is important to take allegations seriously and to investigate them thoroughly by an independent investigator. History tells us that most of these allegations are valid and based on facts. Regardless, a thorough review of the facts is necessary in all cases.

References:

1. Plante, T.G. *Top 10 Myths About Clergy Abuse in the Catholic Church*, *Psychology Today*, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/do-the-right-thing/201908/top-10-myths-about-clergy-abuse-in-the-catholic-church>
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.* citing Zech (2011)
4. Plante at 2.
5. *Pennsylvania Diocese Victims Report*, <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/report>, P 305 of 887
6. *Ibid* at 302 and 305.
7. *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950-2002*, A Research of the John Jay School of Criminal Justice Study, February 2004. Pp 26-28, 57-58/
8. *To Establish a National Center on Child abuse and Neglect, 1973: Hearings on H.R. 6379, H.R. 10552. and H.R. 10968. Before the Select Subcommittee on Educ. of the House Comm. on Educ. and Labor, 93rd Cong. 1st Sess. (1977) (Hereinafter House Comm.).*
9. Everson, M., & Boat, B. (1989). False allegations of sexual abuse by children and adolescents, *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 28(2), 230-235.

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Why Is There An Office Of Safe Environment?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) requires that all Dioceses/Eparchies have in place a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. The ***“Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”*** was adopted by the USCCB in June 2002 as a response to sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons, particularly from the time period of 1950 to 2002. The USCCB established an **Office of Child and Youth Protection** to oversee the application of the Charter’s principles and to create the means for accountability for ensuring implementation of standards.

Reporting

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost.

To report suspected cases of sexual abuse please contact **your local law enforcement agency** or call the **West Virginia Adult / Child Abuse Hotline: 1.800.352.6513**

To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact one of the Bishop's designees at: **304.233.0880 or 1.888.434.6237:**

- Sr. Ellen F. Dunn, O.P., ext. 264
 - Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263
 - Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353
 - Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, ext. 270
- Or, please call:
- The Office of Safe Environment: 304.230.1504

You may also fill out and return a confidential **Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor** by printing one from the Diocese's web site at www.dwc.org, then clicking Diocese › Offices › Office of Safe Environment › Download Files and Forms or by calling 304.230.1504 to request a form via U.S. mail from the Office of Safe Environment.

The Three Components of Compliance

The Safe Environment Program by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston consists of the following three components:

- ✓ Background Check
- ✓ Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children
- ✓ Awareness training for adults (VIRTUS online or live training)

All three components are mandated by the Diocese for persons seeking employment or seeking to volunteer directly or indirectly with children. A person is considered in compliance with the Diocese's Safe Environment Policy upon successful completion of all three components. Every year, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston - as well as all other dioceses in the United States - is audited by the USCCB for compliance with its "*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*." The Diocese also convenes a lay-led Review Board that meets regularly to review all Safe Environment matters and ensure adherence to the Safe Environment process, including reporting to civil authorities.

Teaching Safety

A Student Awareness Program has been implemented since the fall of 2005 to give children information (appropriate for their age levels) and skills to help recognize acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and how to effectively deal with those behaviors. This is a VIRTUS program called "**Teaching Safety**" (the program used to be called "Touching Safety" but was updated this past year). The program is taught in Catholic schools and as part of Parish Schools of Religion. This program offers lesson plans for children in grades Kindergarten through 12.



The "Teaching Safety" lesson cycle for this year is:

School Year **2019-20** ... CYCLE THREE ... **Lesson Five** (by the end of October) and **Lesson Six** (by the end of the school year). If both lessons are taught together, they should be taught by the end of October.

Finding a Place in a Victim's Healing Support System

Michael J. Bland, Psy. D., D. Min., L.C.P.C.

People who have been sexually abused need and deserve healing. Many who seek healing look to support from others, and often a victim will reach out to family and friends. The best family members and friends to turn to are those who stay calm and who will not blame, criticize, or try to control what they believe the victim should do. While family and

friends can be supportive listeners, it is important to remember that they too can have many feelings and reactions to the victim's abuse. Members of a victim's family-support system could, at times, become unavailable as they may be on their own healing journey in response to the victim's experiences of sexual abuse.

Realizing that not all people are capable of dealing with intense emotions, it is often helpful to have more than one person to turn to for support. This gives the victim a diverse support system. Some people may be educated, trained, and competent in areas of sexual abuse. Others may be supportive in ways such as the people who can listen with empathy and compassion to the expression of deep emotions; while others may assist with practical things like providing transportation to a therapy appointment. All of those involved in the support system should share the goal of helping the individual find the healing they seek and deserve.

A Victim Assistance Coordinator can be one of those supportive persons reaching out where they are needed and invited. Coordinators provide information about the recovery process, explain what one might expect, and discuss available resources. Coordinators can also function as an advocate if the survivor runs into bureaucratic roadblocks in obtaining services or if he or she does not understand the Church process. Coordinators can offer Pastoral Care and connection. This connection is very important because it offers the victim knowledge of the process and empowers him or her to make decisions about how to move forward.

Some people can provide an empathetic, compassion ear to a victim who simply needs someone to listen to the story of what happened. For some victims, telling their story might be the first time they start to break down the isolation, secrecy, and shame of what they experienced. Telling one's story may allow a person to reclaim personal power, but it is often a time of intense feelings, emotions, and vulnerability. Telling one's story of suffering sexual abuse may provoke old anxieties and conflicts about issues such as trust, control, sexuality, and self-worth—sometimes triggering feelings and memories related to earlier childhood or life experiences. At this time, therapeutic intervention may be the best place to process intense emotions and the questions that arise. This may be in the form of individual therapy or, for some victims; a therapeutically guided support group may hold the key to breaking down isolation, secrecy, and shame.



Recovery and healing from sexual abuse doesn't mean the abuse never happened—even though many survivors find that in some ways they have changed permanently. Rather, recovery and healing means that less of the survivor's time, is spent thinking about the abuse. A survivor is no longer dominated by the abuse or by his or her intense emotions. A survivor is able to envision a future for him or herself, to set goals, and work to achieve these goals. The recovery process allows life to move forward—albeit accepting that one's life has been changed permanently because of the abuse and the healing process.

In addition to these support roles, the ministry of sexual abuse awareness and education contributes to the healing process for victims. For example, it can create a trusting environment for an individual to share their personal history of abuse. However, it also assures the victims that steps are being taken to make sure that no other child suffers the way that they have suffered.

All of us can be part of the support system that provides an atmosphere for healing for victims of sexual abuse. Whether we provide care or support services directly to a victim or make the most of our participation in the awareness and education opportunities provided by the diocese, we are both becoming part of the solution to the societal risk of sexual abuse and, at the same time, supporting victims in their healing process. We are all finding our place in the victim's healing support system.

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