



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

## DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

1311 BYRON STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 230  
WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA 26003

September 30, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with full support and hope that I write about the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Safe Environment program. There are many dedicated volunteers and employees whose time and talents contribute to the beauty and fullness of life in our diocese, and I thank you for your willingness and cooperation in promoting a culture of safety throughout the Mountain State.

Understanding that this is a deeply painful tragedy that has been a part of the history of the Catholic church for decades, I write with hope that significant progress continues to be made in dioceses all across the United States to protect children and vulnerable adults and to ensure that victims receive the help they need.

Ever since the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was established in 2002 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has remained committed to establishing safe environments at our parishes, schools, related facilities, and events. Our diocese's Safe Environment protocol includes completion of 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. In addition, for those whose roles require more direct and prolonged interaction with children and vulnerable adults, such as clergy and Catholic school principals and teachers, we require monthly awareness training and more frequent background checks. We also require age-appropriate awareness training for our Catholic school and parish school of religion children in grades Kindergarten through 12. Our diocese promotes reporting abuse to civil authorities first and foremost, and we maintain a Victims Assistance Program for victims in need of counseling and healing.

In November 2018, our diocese released its lists of credibly accused clergy as a means to encourage victims to come forward and begin the processes of justice and healing. The lists are housed and may be accessed at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org) under "Diocesan Accountability" and are updated as new information warrants.

Our diocese routinely is audited relative to Safe Environment by an independent audit agency as required by the USCCB, with successful results each year. We also regularly convene a Review Board comprised primarily of lay members to ensure accountability, adherence to the Safe Environment protocol, and reporting to civil authorities.

Raising awareness and screening those who are granted access to children and vulnerable adults are two of the most important ways an organization can help prevent abuse and create safe environments. By participating in the Safe Environment protocol for our diocese, our volunteers and employees are contributing to the protection and well-being of our most cherished blessings – the young and vulnerable among us.

Let us pray for comfort and healing for victims of abuse around the world and that God continues to guide and bless these important prevention efforts.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Mark E. Brennan  
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston