



OUR RESPONSE

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond is dedicated to transparency and acting with accountability in response to the clergy abuse crisis within the Church. Over the past 18 months, we have taken a number of steps to ensure the protection of children and rebuild trust in the Church.

SEPTEMBER 2020

1

Remaining Transparent

An independent, comprehensive audit of clergy files was completed in February 2019. A list containing names of clergy against whom credible and substantiated allegations of sexual abuse were made was published online and is updated as new information becomes available.

Steps for holding bishops accountable for their actions or inactions in regard to the abuse crisis were not included in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* implemented in 2002. In June 2019, the U.S. bishops approved a metropolitan model for the investigation of accusations against bishops. The Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service receives reports of sexual abuse and related misconduct by bishops and relays information to proper Church authorities for investigation.

2

Supporting Victim Survivors

While no monetary amount can ever compensate for the suffering victim survivors have experienced at the hands of Catholic clergy, the diocese established an Independent Reconciliation Program to assist in their healing. The Program was announced in February 2020 and is independently administered by a nationally recognized and highly respected firm specializing in settlement administration. In conjunction with the announcement of the Program, assistance.richmonddiocese.org, a new website dedicated to connecting victim survivors with supportive programming was launched. The website houses all information about the Office of Safe Environment.



3

Office of Safe Environment

A PRAYER FOR HEALING VICTIMS OF ABUSE

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by his blood on the cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters
who have been gravely harmed.



The Office of Safe Environment continues to support victim survivors and their families and to assist them on their path of healing. Individuals are encouraged to contact the 24-hour confidential Victims Assistance Reporting number at 1-877-887-9603 or email vac@richmonddiocese.org to report sexual abuse.

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond urges individuals who have been sexually abused by a priest, deacon, religious, lay employee or volunteer of the diocese to report abuse directly to law enforcement, including Child Protective Services (CPS) at 1-800-552-7096, and by calling the Attorney General's Clergy Abuse Hotline at 1-833-454-9064.

4

Hearing the Faithful

Bishop Knestout held regional Masses of Atonement and listening sessions across the diocese during October 2018. Nearly 1,000 of the faithful attended listening sessions, where they had the opportunity to speak openly with our shepherd.

The Diocesan Pastoral Council met for the first time in August 2019. Nine men and nine women representing the diocese's 15 deaneries were selected to serve on this advisory board to provide consultation to Bishop Knestout on matters of policy, pastoral initiatives and pastoral planning.



5

Strengthening Policies

Effective March 2020, a new *Code of Ethical Conduct* was promulgated to strengthen and set a clear expectation of the core values and behavior required of all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers.

Additionally, all Church personnel are required to complete training through the VIRTUS *Protecting God's Children for Adults* program. Volunteers in regular ministry with children and youth are also required to complete this training.

