

# Diocese of Brownsville - Protecting God's People

As the Catholic faithful of the Valley, we share responsibility for the life and mission of the Church. Each of us is called to celebrate, promote, and when necessary to defend the life and dignity of every person. This awesome responsibility demands that we treat everyone with respect, do what we can to see that harm is never brought to others, especially minors and vulnerable adults, and seek to bring healing for those who have been harmed.

To help achieve these ends, the Diocese of Brownsville has taken the following steps:

- Appointed an Assistance Coordinator to offer immediate assistance to victims.
- Adopted new *Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines for Ethical and Responsible Conduct in Ministry*.
- Introduced a nationally recognized safe environment program of education and prevention of child sexual abuse called *Protecting God's Children*.
- Established a policy requiring criminal background checks of all clergy and religious, of all church employees, and of all volunteers who have regular contact with minors or vulnerable adults.
- Issued a "Report on the History of Sexual Abuse of Minors in the Diocese of Brownsville." The report was issued to the priests and parishioners in January.

An audit conducted by the Gavin Group showed that the diocese was in full compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

The diocese also participated in a study commissioned by the U.S. Bishops and conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. This study, which will be released on Feb. 27, was made to determine the nature and scope of the problem of sexual abuse of children and young people by clergy within the Church in the United States. The diocese hopes that the knowledge gained from the study will lead to a better understanding of the root causes of the problem of sexual abuse of minors, and identify any further action to prevent recurrence.

Ensuring a safe environment for children and young people is a progressive process, and the diocese will continually work towards identifying areas where it can be more effective.

## How to Report Suspected Misconduct

Suspected misconduct with minors by lay church personnel should be reported to the pastor of the parish, the principal of the school, or the head of the Catholic institution in question.

Suspected misconduct with minors by a priest, deacon, or religious should be reported directly to the Bishop or Vicar General at (956) 784-5067 or (956) 542-2501; to Walter Lukaszek, Assistance Coordinator, (956) 784-5066; or to Sr. Norma Pimentel, Director of Social Services, (956) 784-5075.

Letters to the Vicar General or Bishop should be sent to P.O. Box 2279, Brownsville, TX 78522-2279. Upon

request, a form for a *Confidential Notice of Concern* may be obtained from the local pastor, school principal, institution head, or diocese, or it may be downloaded from the diocese's website ([www.cdob.org](http://www.cdob.org)).

***By state law, anyone who suspects abuse or neglect of a minor must report it to local law enforcement officials or to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400.***

## Reaching Out to Victims

Our prayers remain with all victims and their families. As we move forward in doing everything we can to ensure a safe environment for children and young people, we encourage individuals who may have been victims to come forward and contact the Church so that we may offer our assistance.

Bishop Raymundo J. Peña is willing to meet with anyone who has been victimized. He may be reached at (956) 784-5067 or (956) 542-2501. He has also designated the following individuals as contacts:  
Fr. Robert E. Maher, Vicar General,  
(956) 784-5067 or (956) 542-2501;  
Mr. Walter Lukaszek, Assistance Coordinator,  
(956) 784-5066, e-mail: [wlukaszek@cdob.org](mailto:wlukaszek@cdob.org)  
Sr. Norma Pimentel, Director of Social Services,  
(956) 784-5075, e-mail: [npimentel@cdob.org](mailto:npimentel@cdob.org)

## Support Group

The Bishop has asked Dr. Gregorio Piña, a licensed therapist, to facilitate a support group for victims. Individuals who would like additional information may contact him directly at 1-800-270-7004. Anonymity for all who call will be respected.

## Prayer Services

The Diocese's Office of Worship has prepared a worship aid for parishes to use during special prayer services for healing and peace, during this coming Lenten season.

## Prayer for Victims

Lord God, healer of souls and bodies,  
in your unending love and mercy,  
You invite all who are burdened to come to You.  
Relieve the pain of all who suffer from abuse and violence.  
Grant them peace of mind  
and a renewed faith in your protection and care.  
Protect us all from the violence of others,  
keep us safe from the weapons of hate,  
and restore to us tranquility and peace.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Adapted from the *Book of Blessings*