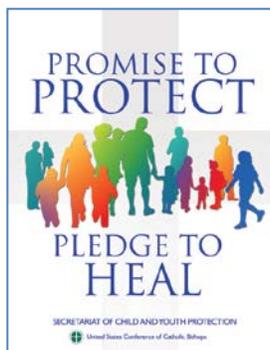


The Diocese of Fresno



Our diocese is so beautifully diverse. So many people, so many cultures, experiencing so many opportunities, and so many challenges – all coming together in so many ways, in so many places. Praise be God that we are united by *one* faith! This faith of ours has been shaken on several occasions throughout history. Within our time, we have been significantly shaken by the clergy abuse crisis that ushered us into a new awakening, a deeper conversion, and a renewed commitment to love God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our mind, and with all of our strength – and to love our neighbors as ourselves. (*Adapted from Mark 12:29-30*). How blessed we are that we have one another to live out this command with special attention given to the young and vulnerable among us!



The Diocese of Fresno has a genuine commitment to creating a Safe Environment for all God's people.

During our last national Safe Environment Audit (2015), our diocese was found compliant with all Norms of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This includes:

APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS, VICTIM ASSISTANCE AND OUTREACH, SCREENING, SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING, CODE OF CONDUCT AND SAFETY TRAINING FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS.

For more information, or to report any concerns regarding a child's safety, past or present, please call the Victim Assistance Coordinator at (559)488-7409



Ten Things Victim/Survivors Have Taught Us

1. We have learned that it takes great courage for a victim/survivor to come forward with his or her story after years, sometimes decades, of silence and feelings of shame.
2. We have learned that to the victim/survivor it is so important to finally simply be believed.
3. We have learned that in spite of their own pain and suffering, many victim/survivors are just as concerned that Church prevents this abuse from happening to more children as they are about themselves and their own needs for healing.
4. We have learned that, while each individual's story is different, what is common is the violation of trust; some survivors trust absolutely no one, to this day, while others have been able to work through this pain with the help and support of loved ones.
5. We have learned that today there are methods of therapy that work particularly well with and for survivors of childhood sexual abuse and that individuals can be helped even after many years of unsuccessfully trying to simply "forget about it."
6. We have learned that very many victim/survivors have lived for many years with the belief that they were the "only one" to have been abused by a particular priest.
7. We have learned that the abuse has robbed some victim/survivors of their faith. For some this means loss of their faith, but for others it means loss of any faith in God at all.
8. We have learned that, while some victim/survivors have been able to succeed in various areas of life (marriage, employment, education, parenting, etc.) as a consequence of the great emotional/psychological harm, others have gone on to lead very healthy and productive lives. We have learned that between those two "ends of a continuum" there is as much variation as there are numbers of victims.
9. We have learned that to be privileged to hear an individual victim/survivor's story is a sacred trust, to be received with great care and pastoral concern.
10. We have learned that we still have much to learn.

Twelve Things the Bishops Have Learned From the Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis

Written By Bishop Blasé Cupich 2010

The Catholic bishops of the United States have learned many lessons from the sex abuse crisis. These twelve are among the most important.

1. The injury to victims is deeper than non-victims can imagine. Sexual abuse of minors is crushing precisely because it comes at a stage in their lives when they are vulnerable, tender with enthusiasm, hopeful for the future and eager for friendships based on trust and loyalty.

2. Despite the justified anger felt by victims toward the church, bishops still need to reach out to them as pastors. Meetings with victims can be challenging for all involved, but they can also be a moment of grace and insight.

3. The causes of clerical sexual abuse are complex, and it is simplistic to reduce them to easy answers. Many factors have been alleged to “explain” this misconduct by clergy, but the fact is that sexual abuse of minors is found in many different circumstances, perpetrated by family members, leaders of youth organizations, doctors, teachers, and others. “Easy answers” underestimate how wide the scope of this problem is in our society.

4. Catholics have been hurt by the moral failings of some priests, but they have been hurt and angered even more by bishops who failed to put the children first. People expect religious leaders above all to be immediate and forthright in taking a strong hand in the face of evil, such as the harm done to the children and young people by sexual abuse.

5. The counsel of lay people, especially parents, is indispensable in a matter that so deeply affects families. Our capacity to respond to sexual abuse of young people has been bolstered by the insights shared with us by parents as to how to do so effectively.

6. Our priests have a resiliency that future generations will recall with admiration. They have remained committed to their vocation day-in, day-out, despite suffering from the actions of those who have besmirched the priesthood they love. Their steadfastness has built a reservoir of good will with our people and is a major factor in explaining why during this terrible crisis most Catholics in our country remain faithful to the church.

7. The church needs to maintain the mandatory safe environment efforts that have been developed. Experience shows that institutions are not as effective in protecting children if standards are voluntary. Any backsliding on this endangers children first of all, and also the credibility gained through the efforts to eradicate the effects of this scourge. Parishes must be the safest places for a child to be.

8. Bishops need to be mutually accountable in their efforts to protect children and must be willing to participate in transparent, independent audits to demonstrate they are keeping the promises we made. What happens in one place happens to us all.

9. Bishops need to resist the defensiveness that institutions often fall back on in crisis moments. Resorting to a conspiratorial interpretation of attacks and adopting a “circle of wagons” approach only prolongs a problem and does nothing to settle it or heal the victims.

10. Self deception is an inherent part of the illness abusers suffer and includes the inclination to diminish the gravity of their behavior and its effects on the individuals abused and on the church at large. Many even manage to convince themselves that they genuinely cared for the children whom they harmed. This makes it almost impossible for them to come to grips with the evil they perpetrated. Claims often made by perpetrators in the past that they were contrite and would stop abusing are never again going to be taken at face value.

11. Our people’s faith is strong and sustains them even in times of challenge. We receive from them a level of emotional and spiritual support which humbles us. Their trust in God sustains not just themselves but us too.

12. Bishops must partner with public authorities by complying with civil laws with respect to reporting allegations of sexual abuse of minors and cooperating with their investigation. All leaders of the community whether religious or secular need to work together to protect children and young people.

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which we bishops adopted in 2002 and renewed twice since, provides direction for our handling the sexual abuse of minors by priests. It can be found on the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:

<http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/charter.shtml>

Prayers of Healing

Loving God,

We take refuge in the healing wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may the victims of abuse who are broken in mind, body and spirit be restored by the touch of your all consuming love. May they find comfort and support from outstretched hands of compassionate hearts and may those who have offended seek you and find the healing they need so that they will offend no more. May your Holy Church continue the work it has begun, and bring your light to those who still remain in darkness and fear. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen

God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong, always present, always just: You gave your only Son to save us by the blood of his 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 our cries as we agonize over the harm done to our brothers and sisters. Breathe wisdom into our prayers, soothe restless hearts with hope, steady shaken spirits with faith: Show us the way to justice and wholeness, enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts, heal your people's wounds and transform our brokenness. Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace, so that we may act with justice and find peace in you. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.