



DIocese OF LAFAYETTE

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

December 21, 2022

DECREE AND LETTER OF PROMULGATION

Dear Clergy, Religious, and Laity of the Diocese of Lafayette:

The mission of our Safe Environment Program is to promote a place of safety for children, youth, vulnerable adults, indeed for all people. Therefore, in virtue of my pastoral responsibilities as Bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette, I hereby promulgate the Diocese's Safe Environment Program, and present this updated Safe Environment Policy as particular law for the Diocese of Lafayette, effective on this date. By this policy but most importantly by our actions I affirm that, both personally and collectively, we are committed to promoting awareness education for children and adults in our efforts to significantly reduce the chances of abuse. The prevention of abuse begins with and requires the diligence of each of us.

The Catholic Church in the United States has made great progress in its commitment to protect the most vulnerable among us from abuse, to promote healing, and reconciliation for those who have been harmed by persons in service to the Church. Nevertheless, the evil of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults is a consequence of sin and fallen human nature, and we must never allow our vigilance to decrease.

This new policy includes important updates which reflect the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons* of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Please take time to review all of our policies and the many education and other resources, which I have approved, on the Safe Environment page of the Diocese's website at <https://diolaf.org/safe-environment>. If you have any questions regarding Safe Environment in the Diocese of Lafayette, I invite you to contact the Office of Safe Environment, at 337-735-9434.

Our Safe Environment Program is intended to be comprehensive for all parishes, schools, ministries, and organizations of the Diocese. All students (Catholic schools and parish programs) are to be provided age-appropriate safe environment education on an annual basis. Further, it is mandatory for all eligible adults (clergy, employees, and all persons who supervise or work with children or vulnerable adults) to complete a Safe Environment training session prior to working with minors or vulnerable adults. Training sessions include, but are not limited to, information about mandated reporting laws, standards of behavior, and appropriate boundaries. Additionally, criminal background checks are required for all adults working with children or vulnerable adults.

I encourage everyone to pray for and, whenever possible, offer appropriate assistance to anyone who has experienced harm at the hands of someone who has represented the Diocese. Safe Environment is making a difference. Ongoing audits and studies have demonstrated that continued fidelity to a culture of Safe Environment is an effective deterrent to abuse. Our Divine Savior tells us that anyone who causes harm to the *little ones* "...it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the

sea." (Matthew 18:6) In keeping with God's will, we must never, never, allow our awareness and commitment to diminish in any way.

Pray for the protection of the *little ones*. Pray for the vulnerable. Pray for those who have been harmed in the past. Pray that our commitment to Safe Environment may remain strong. May the Lord and his Holy Mother prosper the holiness of our Diocese to his greater honor and glory.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend J. Douglas Deshotel, DD
Bishop of Lafayette



Mrs. Maureen K. Fontenot, PHR, SHRM-CP,
Chancellor

