



A Plan of Action to Protect

As People of Faith, we know that prayer and sacrifice are two of the most powerful spiritual resources made available to us by Jesus to help us combat the presence of sin and evil in our lives. For that reason, in the face of the despicable revelations of clergy sexual abuse of minors and sexual harassment of vulnerable adults, including allegations against several Bishops, as well as the mishandling of allegations brought forward, I have committed myself to additional prayer and sacrifice, and have urged all our priests and Faithful people to do the same. It is through prayer and sacrifice that we can open ourselves to God's transforming grace, to purify us and to move our souls to conversion of mind and heart, particularly for those who have betrayed their promises of Sacred Orders.

In addition to prayer and sacrifice, we need a clear plan for what additional steps will be taken to ensure that those entrusted to our pastoral care always enjoy personal safety and complete freedom from sexual abuse. For that reason, I announce the following Plan of Action, for the good of all the Faithful, but most especially our dear children and young people.

1. To **remain steadfast in our support for and solidarity with survivors** of abuse, constantly striving to improve our pastoral care for victims and their families.
2. To **evaluate and refine all of the Safe Environment Programs** and practices already in place, and to employ further measures to ensure that the mandate of full compliance on the part of all clergy, lay leaders, and Church personnel is achieved.
3. To **review and expand avenues of reporting** for those who have been victimized, so that they can come forward without hesitation or fear to share their experience of sexual abuse, in order that we can offer a just and caring response to victims and ensure no perpetrators remain in ministry or leadership.
4. To **hold listening sessions with the Bishop** in the context of Masses and Holy Hours of Reparation, in the various regions and apostolates of the Diocese.
5. To establish a **Consultative Lay Body of Experts** to advise on policy and procedure with regard to situations of abuse within the Church and her organizations.

6. To create and require a **Code of Conduct** for all clergy and lay leaders within the Church.
7. After consultation with the Independent Diocesan Review Board, to **release the names of those priests** for whom sexual abuse of minors has been substantiated.
8. To continue to provide **transparency and cooperation with civil authorities** and to seek further collaboration in dealing with any incidences of abuse within the Church. Continue to turn over all credible claims to civil authorities for investigation and appropriate prosecution, if warranted.
9. To **make priests' files accessible**, once again, for review by the Independent Diocesan Review Board, which is composed of professional lay people and offers direction on the proper handling of cases of abuse.
10. To **do whatever further steps it takes** to eradicate sexual abuse within the Church.

*This **Plan of Action to Protect** is our initial response to the current situation as we know it. We stand ready to make further adjustments, additions, and other actions as may be required in light of any new revelations.*

*At the end of the story of the "Rich Young Man" in the Gospel of Matthew, after the young man went away sad because what Jesus was asking of him to find salvation was too challenging for him (Mt. 19: 16-26), the Apostles asked Jesus: "Who then can be saved?". Jesus answered them, as He answers us in this challenging moment: "For human beings this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible." That is the Truth that we hold on to with conviction and confidence. The human element within the Church, which includes me and all of us, is made up of sinful and imperfect human beings; however, we pray that all of us are striving for holiness and salvation. In addition, we believe with our very beings that God's Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church, and as Jesus promised, "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. (Mt. 16:19). Therefore, as we move forward in Faith, let us be confident that God will guide us in the right ways. May this **Plan of Action to Protect** be a part of God's Plan for His Church, at this particular point in time, here in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, because, as we know, "with God all things are possible".*

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo
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