



## DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

4800 Union Deposit Road | Harrisburg, PA 17111-3710  
bishopsoffice@hbgdiocese.org | (717) 657-4804 ext. 354 | www.hbgdiocese.org

March 25, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*"See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father." Matthew 18:10*

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus, through his words and example, consistently reminds us that children are among the most precious gifts God entrusts to our care. Sadly, we know that some children suffer shamefully because of the actions of others. As we observe National Child Abuse Prevention Month each April, we are reminded of our solemn responsibility to protect those who are the most vulnerable by remaining vigilant. We are called to continually raise awareness and to renew our unwavering commitment to safeguarding every child entrusted to our parishes, schools, and ministries. At the same time, we reaffirm our enduring commitment to walk with survivors of abuse — especially those harmed by members of the clergy. We offer them our prayers, our support, and our resources as they seek healing, justice, and lasting peace.

Sadly, our own Diocese knows the painful reality that trusted individuals committed these grave sins against children. This truth humbles us deeply and strengthens our resolve. We remain steadfast in our vigilance to ensure that every child and vulnerable adult entrusted to our care is protected to the fullest extent possible. Creating and maintaining safe environments in our parishes, schools, and ministries is not simply a policy or a program — it is a moral obligation and a sacred trust.

Over the past twenty years, much has been done within the Church and here in our Diocese to strengthen child protection efforts. Each year, dioceses throughout the United States undergo an independent audit of their youth protection policies and training. The most recent national review, completed by Stonebridge Business Partners, reported that more than 2.2 million background checks were conducted on clergy, employees, and volunteers in 2024. During that same year, over 2.2 million adults and 2.8 million children received training to recognize the warning signs of abuse. Here in our Diocese, these efforts continue with great seriousness and care. During the same reporting year, over 13,000 children participated in our VIRTUS Safe Environment training, while over 11,400 employees, teachers, volunteers, and members of the clergy completed required training and background checks. These measures reflect our ongoing commitment to prevention, accountability, and transparency.

In his message to the National Safeguarding Conference held in Clark-Angeles, Philippines, in 2025, Pope Leo reminded us that the Church "is our spiritual home, as such every parish and pastoral activity is meant to be a space in which we glorify God and care for others, especially children and the vulnerable." He continued that "there can be no tolerance for any form of abuse in the Church."<sup>1</sup> These words continue to guide and challenge us in our mission.

I pray that this month will strengthen our shared resolve to break the cycle of abuse through increased awareness, meaningful education, and steadfast support for those who have suffered.

May the Lord bless our continued efforts to protect every child and to prevent abuse in all its forms, especially among those entrusted to our care. Let us also pray for all who have endured abuse, and for all whose lives have been touched by its painful consequences, that they may experience healing, justice, and peace. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of God and our Blessed Mother, may our work bear fruit, so that every child is kept safe and every survivor is accompanied with hope, compassion, and healing.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior  
Bishop of Harrisburg

*The Diocese of Harrisburg encourages anyone aware of misconduct or abuse by any person affiliated with the Diocese to report it to Child Line at 1-800-932-0313, to contact local law enforcement, and to contact the Diocese by calling 1-800-626-1608.*

<sup>1</sup> Deborah Catellano Lubov, "Pope Leo XIV: 'No tolerance for any form of abuse in the Church,'" *Vatican News*, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-10/pope-leo-xiv-philippines-church-national-safeguarding-conference.html> (accessed February 24, 2026).