



April, 2021

Dear Friends -

We have no more sacred or urgent task than to restore the trust of the Catholic Faithful, the broader public, and all who look to the Church as a symbol of goodness, commitment to the Gospel values of Jesus Christ, and as an instrument of God's healing among all who have been harmed by the scourge of sexual abuse by members of the clergy.

As the bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo since January 15, 2021, I have made it abundantly clear to members of the clergy, diocesan employees, and volunteers that there is zero tolerance for any act of sexual abuse, or sexual harassment, toward a young person or adult. Such acts are an affront to who and what we claim to be as Christians and as Catholics. It is why I have insisted on a regular and thorough review of all existing policies and protocols as detailed in the Diocese's "Policy and Procedure for the Protection of Young People and Vulnerable Adults," which is based upon the Charter developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We are not only committed to ensuring the safety of children, but to critically reviewing all policies and protocols on an annual basis in order to verify that we are adhering to the most rigorous standards as confirmed through an independent auditor.

The Diocese's policies regarding the conduct of clergy, employees and volunteers toward adults is likewise clear and unequivocal. The "Adult Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures" define prohibited conduct, established procedures for addressing complaints, and outlines appropriate consequences for violators. The policy also emphasizes the critical importance of education and training in the Diocese's ongoing effort to eliminate all forms of sexual misconduct, in addition to defining personal boundaries, the violation of which is a betrayal of the ministerial relationship.

It is my personal commitment as bishop of this Diocese to work each and every day to restore the trust that has been broken and to bring about the healing that those who have suffered by the abuse of others so need and desire. Recognizing that actions speak louder than words, we expect that how we deal with these very serious and painful matters will be judged according to the highest standards of transparency and accountability - knowing that ultimately God's judgments are everlasting and true.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael W. Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

The Most Reverend Michael W. Fisher
Bishop of Buffalo