



Diocese of Santa Rosa

Chancery

Statement of Bishop Robert F. Vasa
Diocese of Santa Rosa

The most recent news about the Dioceses of Pennsylvania and the stark reminder of the historical record of child abuse in the Church brings to the forefront, once more, the horrible impact of the immoral actions of priests, bishops and now even a cardinal. This news reminds all of us of the need for continued vigilance lest those experiences of the past, which continue to have present day ramifications, be repeated today. While much progress has been made in the curtailment of abuse since the 2002 Charter, the reminder of how poorly the Church responded to the allegations of abuse in the past and the implication that our present response is still inadequate is most distressing.

Every Diocese, Parish and School needs to be safe place for all. To that end, we have policies and procedures in place mandating that every person who serves in our Diocese, whether clergy, religious, teacher, staff or lay volunteer, is screened via fingerprints and receives training in how to recognize and report predatory behavior. The Diocese of Santa Rosa has a zero tolerance policy with regard to the sexual abuse of minors on the part of anyone who serves the church. We work consistently to assure that we respond to each allegation of abuse with seriousness and with compassion. We rely upon the expertise of an independent Diocesan Review Committee comprised of skilled lay experts in a variety of fields. Each allegation of abuse, and even some which do not involve children, are brought to the Committee for their expert analysis and opinion. The discussions and recommendations are most helpful in arriving at a consensus of how best to proceed with each individual case.

I appreciate the proposed initiative of Cardinal DiNardo, President of the US Bishops Conference, regarding bishops' accountability and look forward to discussions about how to best move forward.

Finally, and certainly very importantly, I understand that these renewed revelations are most distressing for the faithful and especially for those who have experienced some form of abuse. The Church is working to eliminate abuse and to respond 100% in an appropriate way to reports of abuse and yet we do continue to make mistakes. I wish I could promise that there would be no more abuse and no more mistakes but I cannot. I can only promise that I do not take any of this lightly and that I will always take allegations most seriously and strive to respond to each individual case with as much openness, integrity and determination as possible.

I ask that God shower down upon all of you an abundance of His strengthening grace and blessing.

+Robert F. Vasa, Diocese of Santa Rosa
August 17, 2018