



COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA  
DIOCESE OF OHIO, MICHIGAN & INDIANA

July 26, 2020

Beloved Members of our Christ-Loving Diocese: Reverend Clergy, Deacons, Parish Councils, Servants, faithful- young and old- I greet you in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, wishing you all blessings.

The Church is the House of God and of His Angels. The role of the Church is to lead her children to the Kingdom of God, living it here on earth and then for eternity. Fundamental to our roles as the members of the Body of Christ is the protection of our children and ensuring their spiritual, emotional, physical and mental well-being. This is not negotiable.

The Church and this Diocese lament the sins of sexual misconduct, and will not tolerate sexual misconduct by any- clergy and laity. Sexual misconduct includes many sins and includes misconduct at all ages, none more heartbreaking than the abuse of minors and children who are the most innocent and helpless of all. All acts of sexual misconduct are strictly condemned.

I have directed the Diocesan Legal Affairs Committee to prepare an official Sexual Misconduct Policy. The Committee will present a policy that is comprehensive, abides by the laws of the United States and the States of Ohio, Michigan and Indiana and will be made public and shared throughout the diocese. The policy will include a carefully planned procedure designed to ensure that allegations of sexual misconduct by clergy and others with roles in the church are taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, and adjudicated justly. In cases where the charge involves a minor, we take very seriously the legal requirements to cooperate with applicable civil authorities in investigating these issues, in compliance with Civil and Canon laws. From this date until the approval of the new policy, the policy enacted by the Diocese of Los Angeles on March 5, 2013 shall be in effect.

This policy is not reactive to allegations, but seeks to prevent all forms of sexual misconduct. The document will include mandatory requirements for training and background screenings of all who interact with our children- as is the requirement at schools and churches throughout the United States. This training will include all clergy, servants, Sunday School teachers, church employees, volunteers and all who may interact with children. The training will not stop with issues of the abuse of minors, but will include all types of sexual misconduct and harassment.

A dedicated Review Board will be entrusted with the investigation of claims of sexual misconduct and will include clergy, female and male lay members, legal counsel, mental health counselors and social workers who are empowered to conduct investigations and are properly and professionally qualified to ensure that the policy and safeguards are followed.

We will also enact an official Diocesan policy on the standards for priestly ordination, background checks and guidelines for visiting clergy.

Finally, and of critical importance- the Diocese is committed to establishing a strong support system for victims of sexual misconduct to seek both professional and spiritual guidance. We stand committed to supporting survivors through the healing process and to ensure that our policies both prevent any abuse and when there are violations to ensure proper accountability.

Children are a gift from God. Our Lord puts children as an example for how to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (MT 18:3). Our Lord warns anyone who harms a child with grave consequences (MT 18:6). Let us all strive to ensure that these innocent and pure children always find the Church as their haven of safety and salvation and let all strive to live according to the calling with which we are called.

  
+SARAPHIM  
Bishop of Ohio, Michigan and Indiana