

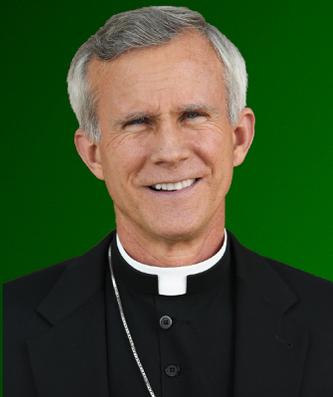
# SAFE ENVIRONMENT IN THE DIOCESE OF TYLER

## ENSURING OUR CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED



*My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

We have all been deeply hurt and saddened by the recent scandals in the Church. Please know that the Diocese of Tyler will do everything possible to protect the faithful from abuse, most especially, our children and vulnerable adults.



This is not the time for business as usual. As your bishop, I will do my part to ensure that our clergy, including myself, are held accountable to the high standards demanded by our ordination. While we are all sinners, bishops, priests, and deacons are obliged in a special way to lives of public witness of holiness and virtue. For your part, please pray for the clergy. They are special targets for attack by Satan and his forces. Your support is essential.

On a day-to-day basis, we ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults in the Diocese of Tyler through sound policies and procedures which promote a safe environment. I will ensure that these continue to be carefully observed and updated as needed. While the challenges faced in the Church are, above all, spiritual in nature, tools like background checks, training of clergy and volunteers, sound reporting mechanisms and outreach to victims are critical in the process of reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse.

As Christ's bride, the Church, we are all called to return to the Gospel virtues of humility, chastity, and obedience, and Church leaders must take the lead in this quest. As your bishop I am personally committed to this and I will support our priests as we seek to joyfully live out our priesthood in Jesus Christ. We must all be held to the standards of Gospel virtues proclaimed by God's Divine Son.

May God, who is all loving and all merciful, watch over his Church and protect all of his people, especially the children and the vulnerable – the "little ones" for whom Christ the Lord has a special love.

### **INTRODUCING PRAESIDIUM**

In the spring of 2018, the Diocese of Tyler engaged the services of Praesidium, a national leader in safe environment practices and abuse prevention. Praesidium works closely with the diocese in the areas of policies, screening, training, monitoring and supervision, internal feedback systems, responding, and administrative practices. Beginning in 2019, the diocese will use Praesidium's Armatus® program to train and certify all church personnel in our safe environment policies and procedures.

### **STANDARD**

The Diocese of Tyler expects all Church personnel - priests, deacons, religious, paid employees, and volunteers - to conduct their lives and ministry (whether in a parish, mission, Catholic school, or other Catholic institution or ministry) with ethics and integrity. We are committed to keeping all those served by the Church in northeast Texas safe!

### **POLICIES**

The Diocese of Tyler has comprehensive policies for all church personnel. The **Code of Conduct for Church Personnel** and other policies and procedures for the Diocese of Tyler can be found at: <https://diotyl.org/promoter>.

### **REPORTING**

The Diocese of Tyler takes any violations of our policies for church personnel very seriously. If you know or suspect that a crime has been committed, call the local police. Abuse of minors or the elderly can also be reported to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at (800) 252-5400. Any current or past cases of abuse involving someone who works for the Church should also be reported to the Promoter of Justice. The Diocese of Tyler will fully cooperate with any investigation.

If you are a victim, know a victim, or need to report a violation of the diocesan Code of Conduct for Church Personnel, call (877) 415-6423. This hot-line is answered 24/7 by representatives at Praesidium, a professional, third-party service utilized by the Diocese of Tyler.

Any complaints involving abuse of minors will be brought before our diocesan review board which is composed of lay professionals who help the bishop in his role of safeguarding our children.

### **VICTIMS**

The Church is committed to taking all allegations seriously and supporting victims of abuse. Victims and their families are entitled to pastoral care and spiritual support. Professional care like counseling can also be arranged.

### **OUTREACH**

The Diocese of Tyler encourages its parishes and institutions to continually and consciously reach out to victims of abuse. Outreach is concerned with reaching out to victims of abuse whether they have been recently harmed, as well as those who may have been harmed many years ago.

