



Office of the Bishop

*Diocese of Erie
P.O. Box 10897
Erie, Pennsylvania 16514-0897*

July 3, 2007

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Five years ago, the disclosure of the child abuse scandal gravely challenged our church community, causing great pain and sorrow. As we continue to address this issue which faces not only our Church, but society as well, we look to Christ for guidance and counsel.

The risen Christ is a wounded Christ – he showed his disciples in the upper room his wounded hands and his open side. The risen Christ is a wounded Christ and his Church is a wounded Church.

From the very beginning of its life, the Church was wounded – a Church marked with the infidelity of Judas and Peter and Thomas. The Church today is no different – we are all part of that same history. In spite of this record of human imperfection and sin, Christ comes to us and says: “Peace, I still love you, I am still with you,” just as he came to his despairing disciples in the upper room on that first Easter.

Christ’s words to his disciples at the Last Supper also help us put perspective on this scandal. He said: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me.” As we continue to address these issues, Christ’s serene and reassuring words touch our hearts and spirits to give us courage and strength.

It is in this spirit of faith and trust that we address the issue of child abuse and the creation of safe environments in the Diocese of Erie. It is my fervent hope and prayer that anyone who has suffered abuse by a person in a position of authority and trust in the Church will come forward to receive

the psychological, emotional and spiritual healing that we humbly offer and victims so rightly deserve.

Parishes, schools and agencies continue to put enormous energy into completing background checks and conducting training for all employees and volunteers who work with children and youth. Schools and religious education programs are annually conducting in-servicing programs for all of our children and youth on touching safety and safe environment strategies. Our parents are being provided with information and resources to help them keep their children safe.

We have also recently revised and updated our *Policy for the Protection of Children*, including in it the new provisions of the Pennsylvania state statutes regarding the reporting of child abuse. Our diocesan Child Protection web page has been re-organized and revised so that all concerned may have ready access to the resources available for compliance with diocesan mandates.

I pray these efforts will ensure that our church environments are safe and holy for all. I also ask for your continued prayers for vigilance and courage as we invite the children to come to us in safety and in peace.

Your brother in Christ,
Most Rev. Donald W. Trautman, STD, SSL
Bishop of Erie