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DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA  
*OFFICE OF THE BISHOP*

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October 5, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Allow me to express my pastoral concern for you, the Faithful of the Diocese, during these troubling times for our Church. Please be assured that the Diocese of Venice is steadfast in its commitment to protect minors.

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi has announced an investigation into how the seven Dioceses of Florida have handled allegations of past sexual abuse of minors. Similar inquiries are going on in States around the Country. The Diocese of Venice welcomes the State's inquiry and will cooperate with investigators. This investigation is an opportunity to further promote the goal of protecting children. It is hoped that these efforts foster a response combatting the scourge of sexual abuse, particularly of minors, throughout our entire society.

As faithful Catholics, I would like you to be aware that this investigation is not the result of any new allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. The Diocese has taken proactive steps toward the protection of minors and the prevention of future abuse and has undergone regular independent audits. Our Diocesan Review Board is made up of primarily qualified lay professionals, and in the event of an allegation reported to the Diocese involving a minor, the Board advises me if action is needed. These steps ensure that our policies are being properly executed and are effective.

Any victim of abuse is encouraged to come forward and must make a report to the Department of Children and Families (***DCF Hotline at 1 (800) 96-ABUSE or contact local police***). To report abuse by Diocesan personnel or volunteers, please also call the **Diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator at (941) 416-6114**. The Church wants any victim of sexual abuse to know their allegation will be taken seriously and that the Diocese of Venice will stand with them as they seek healing.

As your Shepherd, I humbly encourage everyone to recall that when faith is tested, it is prayer that helps find the strength to persevere. God's Grace allows us to discover truth, confront it with courage and find healing in the embrace of our Savior. My prayer is that recent revelations will shed the light of God's wisdom on these troubling matters and show Church leaders the future steps needed. Know, I support actions being taken by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to hold bishops to a greater accountability.

Once again, I offer my apology to those who have been harmed by abuse. I also wish to express my prayerful support for faithful Catholics who bear the hardship of these difficult times. None of us can change the past, but we can make a difference going forward. I pledge continued action to protect minors entrusted to the pastoral care of the Diocese of Venice and to bring healing to victims of abuse while working to strengthen the trust of the Catholic Faithful.

May God bless you and your family,

Sincerely Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Frank J. Dewane", preceded by a small cross symbol. The signature is written in a cursive style.

+ Frank J. Dewane  
Bishop of the Diocese of  
Venice in Florida

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