



Diocese of Fall River
Office of the Bishop
Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

October 7, 2026

Dear Friends in Christ,

Following the report issued by the Attorney General's Office last month, I feel that it is important to write to you, the people of the Diocese of Fall River, as your Bishop and brother Christian. The report provides a painful historical account of clergy sexual abuse of children in the Dioceses of Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester, together with the tragic failures by Church leaders to respond appropriately.

I must begin by expressing my profound sorrow to all who suffered abuse at the hands of clergy in the Diocese of Fall River. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the "Mountain of the Lord" as a place of sanctuary, a place where we encounter the Lord and experience his love and consolation. We can understand the "mountain" to refer to the Church. Tragically, survivors of abuse endured a grave evil that was compounded by the betrayal of those entrusted with their care. When survivors and their families sought help, too often they did not receive the support, compassion, and justice they deserved. We failed to care for them in their moment of greatest need and vulnerability. To all who continue to carry these wounds, I offer my sincere apology, my support, and my continued prayers for healing.

Reading the report is not easy. Although many of the incidents it describes occurred decades ago, the wounds remain. I know that many faithful Catholics experience sadness, anger, disappointment, or even embarrassment when confronted with this painful chapter in our Church's history. Such feelings are understandable.

I am reminded of the words of the prophet Micah: "You have been told, O Mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). We must recognize with sorrow the terrible failures of the past, continue to seek justice and healing for those who have been harmed, and walk humbly as a Church committed to ensuring that such failures are never repeated. These words have guided me in my responsibility as shepherd of the Diocese of Fall River and in our continuing commitment to protect the vulnerable, care for those who have been harmed, and foster a culture of accountability, transparency, and safety throughout our Diocese.

While the report identifies important shortcomings that persisted into recent years, the Diocese has undertaken substantial reforms, particularly since 2020, and today operates under significantly stronger policies, procedures, and safeguards than existed during the decades when most abuse occurred. Over the last 25 years, significant measures have been implemented, strengthened, and, particularly in recent years, more consistently integrated into diocesan practice.

Our Diocese is committed to fostering a culture of protection. Safe environment training, background screening, and adherence to a code of conduct are required of all who minister, work, or volunteer within the Diocese. These efforts also include mandatory reporting to law enforcement, independent review processes led by lay experts, victim assistance services, publication of a list of credibly accused clergy, and numerous other safeguarding measures.

The Attorney General's report also noted several reforms undertaken by the Diocese, including the comprehensive measures implemented in 2020 and the reorganization of our Ministerial Review Board under strengthened standards.

I am grateful for the dedicated lay experts, clergy, religious, educators, and other staff who work diligently to oversee and maintain these protections. Their commitment reflects our shared determination that the failures of the past never be repeated.

Despite the significant progress that has been made, our work is continuing. Safeguarding our community is a responsibility that requires constant vigilance. The Attorney General's report concluded with a series of recommendations for dioceses. While many of these practices are already in place, all of the recommendations remain under review as we recognize they may further strengthen our efforts.

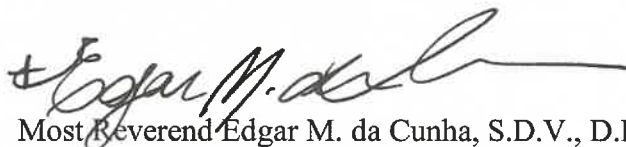
Two years ago, the Diocese of Fall River published a special report entitled *Fostering a Culture of Protection* to provide an update on our safe environment initiatives. In that report, I wrote that "it is our collective diocesan priority to remain vigilant to protect children and vulnerable adults in our parishes, schools, programs, and ministries." I reaffirm that commitment to you today.

As we continue this work, we remain mindful that behind every case described in the report is a person whose life was profoundly affected. Our commitment to safeguarding is rooted not only in policies and procedures, but also in our responsibility to honor survivors through accountability, compassion, and ongoing support.

My dear friends, I want to assure you of my continued prayers for you and your loved ones. I pray that our Diocese may truly be a "Mountain of the Lord" - a place where all may come to encounter the Lord and in Him find healing, hope, love, and consolation. Please join me in praying for survivors of abuse and their families, and for all who continue to suffer. I also ask your prayers for our Diocese and for our priests. In their faithful service each day, I witness their dedication, generosity, and care for parishioners, and I am grateful for their ministry.

May God bless you and your families.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Edgar M. da Cunha", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.
Bishop of Fall River