



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

July, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

Since my installation as Eighth Bishop of Fall River in September of 2014, I have made it my mission to protect our most vulnerable throughout the diocese.

I am pleased to report that we are continuing to make progress in the protection of children and vulnerable adults and in our pastoral outreach to victim/survivors. Today I am announcing important developments in furtherance of those goals.

We have created a new Ministerial Review Board (MRB) with an expanded mandate to replace the Diocesan Review Board. This board is composed of members of the laity and a member of the clergy. We have been blessed by the extraordinary people who have agreed to serve on the MRB, including a retired judge, a retired FBI agent, and a licensed psychologist, to name just three.

We have also created a new policy for the MRB that provides this Board with broad authority to advise me on all issues involving the protection of minors and vulnerable adults and, in particular, to advise me regarding allegations of all forms of misconduct by clergy, including sexual abuse.

I have adopted an updated policy outlining the protection of minors and vulnerable adults which clarifies that all who minister, work or volunteer in the Diocese will be required to agree to the “Essential Three”: 1) Submit to a criminal background check; 2) Complete Safe Environment Training; and 3) Sign a Code of Conduct.

These policies were the work of many people including outside consultants and my Chancery Staff as well and, before I approved them, they were unanimously recommended to me by the MRB.

These are just the latest steps we’ve taken toward achieving the important goals I’ve set. Over the last year we have also enhanced our protection of minors and vulnerable adults and our outreach to victim/survivors of abuse by developing a number of initiatives, which include the following:

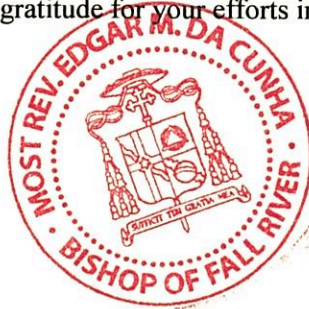
- On July 1, 2019, I established a new position of Director of Professional Standards and Oversight and hired Lorraine Levy, a retired Massachusetts State Trooper to fill that role. She now oversees the Office of Safe Environment as well as managing the requirements of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and *The Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*.
- In July of 2019, we posted an opening for a licensed social worker to join the OSE as the Victim Assistance Coordinator to advocate and promote healing for victim/survivors. We have hired Carolyn Shipp to fill that role and she has gone to extraordinary lengths to work with our victim/survivors.
- We have hired a new CORI Coordinator for the Catholic School Office to ensure that all who minister, work and volunteer in our schools are compliant, including fingerprinting any clergy who are assigned to each Catholic school.

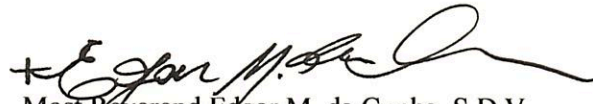
Page 2  
July, 2020

I believe that our Diocese has never been in a better position to both protect children and vulnerable adults, and to effectively and pastorally address the needs of our victim/survivors. We still have much work to do. I acknowledge the need for continued self-examination to improve the way we safeguard the most vulnerable, as well as the way we address the needs and the suffering of those whom we, as a Church, have harmed over the decades.

I congratulate those who have worked so hard to bring us this far, and I thank you in advance for your work in protecting and serving God's people.

With my sincerest gratitude for your efforts in sharing in this vital ministry in the Church, I remain



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