



Diocesan Centre
Coursington Road
Motherwell
ML1 1PP

Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of Motherwell

19th September 2021.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I hope this finds you and your loved ones well.

In today's gospel from St Mark we hear of Jesus' lovely way of welcoming children and speaking about them – "He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me'." Since we are to see Jesus himself in every child and treat them accordingly, we must love and care for them in the Church in the best way possible, and this is to be portrayed in our Safeguarding Services, through which we seek to protect children, young people, and the vulnerable.

On September 8th the updated version of our Instruction on Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Scotland, In God's Image version 2, came into effect. The eight standards which instruct our Safeguarding will therefore continue to guide this vital work in the years ahead. The document is available on-line on the Bishops Conference of Scotland website and you are encouraged to access it. A National Webinar, entitled Growing Our Culture of Care, will take place on Saturday October 2nd from 11am to 1pm to present in God's Image version 2, and there is still opportunity to register if you wish to take part. The recent Safeguarding newsletter, Safeguarding Matters in the Catholic Church in Scotland, contains the details of how to register. Please consider doing so if you are involved in Safeguarding in any capacity.

Earlier in the summer the Independent Audit of the Diocese of Motherwell was published and the work of Safeguarding in the Diocese will be guided by its findings and conclusions. The audit was carried out by SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence), on-line due to the pandemic, and Motherwell is the 4th Scottish Diocese to undergo such a scrutiny, and it shows the determination of the Scottish Bishops and Dioceses to allow our Safeguarding to be fully analysed and for recommendations to be made and hopefully implemented in the future. The full report is available on the BCOS and the Motherwell Diocesan websites. I express my thanks to all who participated, particularly our Safeguarding Adviser, Veronica McKenna, and to the two ladies who carried out the audit and produced the report.

The Audit's conclusions recognised the good work already being done by clergy and laity in delivering safe systems and processes, but suggested further developments are necessary. The suggested areas of development include – a theology of safeguarding, visibility of leadership, improved governance structures, development of a strategic safeguarding plan founded on IGiv2, a stronger Communication strategy, greater support for parishes, strengthening the good work being done with survivors, consideration of further independent scrutiny especially if conflicts of interest arise or a conflict has to be resolved. A lot to do therefore by everyone in the Diocese as the Audit frequently

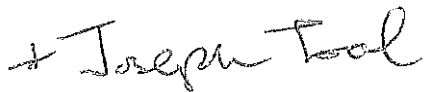
makes clear that Safeguarding is the business of everyone and a shared responsibility. Jesus himself, in particular his attention to children , must always be our guide and inspiration.

The Audit asked us to consider how the Diocese might reach out to survivors who have not yet come forward, and I take this opportunity to invite anyone who has suffered abuse at the hands of clergy or other church personnel, particularly in their childhood, however long ago that may be, to have the courage to come forward and make their situation known. You can contact the Diocese either by emailing our Diocesan Adviser – veronicamckenna@rcdom.org.uk - or by phoning the Diocesan Office on 01698 269114. You will be listened to sympathetically and every effort will be made to offer assistance, remembering that we have a mandatory reporting policy, which requires that all allegations of abuse, including non-recent abuse, are referred to the Police.

Thank you for reading these words. I emphasise the importance of this work, and am grateful for all the good work done in recent years both nationally and in the Diocese of Motherwell, and pray that we will continue to work well together in order to fully protect the young and vulnerable.

With my prayers and best wishes,

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph Toal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+ Joseph Toal