



## OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

### ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE of ORANGE

13280 CHAPMAN AVENUE, GARDEN GROVE, CA 92840

Dear parents and guardians,

On behalf of administrators, teachers and staff - welcome to a new school year! I am excited to have joined the Diocese of Orange as the new Superintendent of Schools. Our teachers and staff are committed to ensuring every student is provided with a Catholic education that prepares them to excel in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I am so proud to be a part of this effort.

We work tirelessly to make sure our students learn in an inspiring, faith-centered environment that is engaging, compassionate and, above all else, safe. I, along with Most Rev. Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange, have a steadfast commitment to upholding a safe environment across the Diocese so that our students are free to worship and learn without any threat of harm. Some of our safety measures include:

- Requiring mandatory Safe Environment training for all adults – including clergy – who work or volunteer with children and youth, as well as Safe Environment training for children
- Conducting extensive and comprehensive background screening and fingerprinting services for all priests, deacons, educators and all other adults working with children and youth in parishes and schools
- Requiring parish and school sites to maintain accurate records of fingerprinting and background screening and Safe Environment training, to ensure all required employees and clergy adhere to the diocesan-wide requirement
- Training and supporting parish and school onsite Safe Environment trainers
- Incorporating safety education programs into curriculum at schools and parishes. These programs provide age-appropriate education for our children and information for teachers and parents

To learn more about our work to keep children safe, please visit the Diocese of Orange Office of Child and Youth Protection webpage at: <https://tinyurl.com/OCsafeschools>

As an educator, parent and proud product of Catholic schools, I believe strongly in the mission of our schools and the importance of being able to connect with children through the lens of faith. Now, more than ever, our children need that.

I am blessed to join the Diocese during an exciting time of growth, and look forward to the journey ahead. As we begin this school year, I invite you to pray for all those involved in the ministry of Catholic education. We are committed to living out the evangelizing mission of the Church through our Catholic schools and creating future leaders – not only for the Church, but for our world.

Yours in Service,  
Erin Barisano, Ed. D  
Superintendent of Schools  
Orange County Catholic Schools



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My dear sisters and brothers in the Lord,

It is with the utmost sorrow that I write to you in this time of great scandal and tribulation in our Church. Many people in leadership, particularly among the episcopacy, have failed the people of God. There can be no ambiguity about this.

As your spiritual father and the shepherd of this Diocese, I have prayed, struggled, and reflected a great deal these past few weeks in order to determine how I can best serve you.

The release of the Pennsylvania's Grand Jury report yesterday confirms that we who lead the Church have a great responsibility to take action against a predation that can only be called satanic.

After I was appointed to our Diocese I began to meet regularly with our [Oversight Review Board](#), whose charge it is to advise me on matters concerning accusations of sexual abuse of a minor perpetrated by a cleric. Based on the painful experiences in my home Diocese of Springfield, Illinois during Bishop Daniel Ryan's tenure which resulted in a devastating loss of trust, I wanted to take every opportunity to create a truly safe environment, including reviewing allegations involving adults, not just minors. I regularly seek the members of this group to offer their observations and advice on a variety of matters that came to the attention of the Diocese. Their counsel has been invaluable and a great help in dealing with matters of misconduct, regarding both clerical and lay matters. Their [membership](#) includes ten lay experts, one priest, and one religious sister. Five diocesan employees also staff the Board, three of whom are clergy and two lay. I am grateful to all of the members for their sage advice and willingness to serve. In addition, I urge anyone who has been a victim of clerical abuse in our Diocese to report the abuse by calling our toll free number: (800) 364-3064.

In light of the revelations surrounding Archbishop McCarrick, not to mention the situations in Honduras and Chile, I now know that the review process needs to be expanded to include claims from seminarians and priests so that they, too, are protected from sexual abuse by those in power. Additionally, I will review our process with my leadership team to confirm that it is as robust as possible.

Canon law provides for judicial processes to try all clergy, including bishops, who are charged with canonical crimes. Make no mistake, sexual crimes against the faithful are serious violations of Church law. As a canon lawyer, I know also that these canonical processes were strengthened by Pope Francis as recently as 2016. It goes without saying that there are civil and criminal recourses, as well.

I appreciate the righteous anger expressed toward those who have failed to follow due process and the demands of accountability. I also want to assure you that I am committed to join with my brother bishops to address these failings. A competent independent national investigative body comprised of qualified professionals needs to be created so that if we have systemic issues within our Church, they can be thoroughly reviewed and addressed. I pledge my support to this and will allocate diocesan funds for this purpose.

Unequivocally, I join my brother bishops who have already spoken out to identify the root cause as a crisis in holiness. Shepherds who sincerely seek the Lord do not abuse the power that Our Lord has entrusted to them. Those who abuse this holy office fail Christ and his Church.

In this difficult time, please join with me to pray that our Church be purified, that all the people who have been wounded by abuse on the part of the clergy experience healing, and that I, along with the rest of Church leadership, act with wisdom, courage, and humility to fulfill the office that the Lord has entrusted to us.

On this, the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, I pray that she be consoled to see the truth of these injustices coming to light so that her children may be part of a Church that is worthy of them and of her Son.

With gratitude for your support and appreciation for your continued prayers,

Kevin W. Vann  
Bishop of Orange