



## Diocese of Austin

6225 Highway 290 East · Austin, TX 78723

[www.austindiocese.org](http://www.austindiocese.org)

### Office of the Bishop

August 1, 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

In the summer of 2001, the Diocese of Austin inaugurated a groundbreaking program called **Ethics and Integrity in Ministry** (EIM). Under the guidance of the Bishop, a group of professionals developed a safe environment program that recognized and proclaimed that the Church must first be a protector of all God's children. Our diocesan EIM program was born of the Catholic belief that we are each called to protect those who are most vulnerable.

As Bishop of the Diocese of Austin, I am committed to ensuring that all who serve in ministry in our parishes and schools do so with the strongest ethics and the highest integrity. In doing so, we become active protectors of children and the vulnerable from preventable harm. Compliance with our EIM program is required of all individuals in the Diocese (paid and volunteer) that serve our youth and those adults considered vulnerable due to age or some incapacity.

EIM compliance consists of two components: the submission of an Application for Ministry which includes signing a Code of Ethics and permits the diocese to complete a background check; and attendance at an EIM workshop every three years. The workshop uses a media series titled *Called to Protect* and includes discussions and a review of our diocesan policies. Participants receive printed material to take home for reference and further information.

Our EIM program also provides age-appropriate and doctrinally-sound education to our youth, using *Called to Protect for Children* (K-5<sup>th</sup>) and *Called to Protect for Youth* (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>) to teach them about boundaries, respect for self and others, safety in relationships and interactions, and the sacredness that each one has as a child of God. Education of our young people does not minimize the requirement of adults to serve as first protectors of our youth, but rather it strengthens them by providing tools for them to use as they mature into strong, healthy members of our church family.

As you participate in this process, you join more than 60,000 people in our diocese who have made a commitment to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people in our Catholic parishes. I am grateful for the many ways you live your baptismal call by offering your time and gifts to the service of God's people in the Diocese of Austin. It is through the efforts and collaboration of priests, deacons, religious men and women, employees, and lay ministers and volunteers that we are able to serve those who are entrusted to us and to lead them in the ways of faith.

Wishing you God's blessings and with gratitude for your service, I remain

Gratefully in Christ,

Most Reverend Joe S. Vázquez  
Bishop of Austin