



**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**



**DIOCESE OF MISSISSAUGA,
Vancouver and Western Canada**



In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

As the Body of Christ, we always celebrate and mourn together. Today is a day where we mourn and chant with David the Psalmist and say *“Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.”* (**Psalm 130:1-2**)

St. Paul told us that as sons and daughters of Christ, we are fully accountable, first and foremost in front of God, for safeguarding the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of our fellow believers.

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” (**1 Corinthians 12:12,26**)

Claims of sexual misconduct were recently confirmed to have taken place involving a now defrocked member of the clergy. Such deplorable conduct is heartbreaking for all of us and is intolerable. We offer our sincerest prayers to our Lord for anyone who may have suffered as we know that *“He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.”* (**Psalm 147:3**) Every girl, boy, woman and man deserve to be treated with respect, and if harm is ever done to them, they equally deserve to see the full extent of justice served. Forgiveness, as a Biblical commandment, must be coupled with fairness and justice, as the Bible tells us that while Christ is the ultimate forgiver, He is just as He said *“For offenses must come, but woe to the man by whom the offense comes!”* (**Matthew 18:7**)

Our congregation members are the most treasured gift for the Church, and as such we vow to always protect each other with every ounce of sincerity, devotion, care and love.

We want to assure our congregation members in every Church throughout the Diocese that the Diocese has zero-tolerance for any type of sexual misconduct and sexual crimes whether committed by clergy or laity alike. We ask that you report any criminal wrongdoing immediately to the appropriate legal authorities and to the Church for ecclesiastical and pastoral investigation and intervention.

We have formed a committee that is working on expanding our policies that are aimed at raising awareness and accountability among clergy, servants, employees, volunteers as well as parents with regards to matters related to sexual misconduct and sexual crimes. As part of this process, a system will be established for receiving and investigating complaints. We understand the societal stigma associated with such instances, and we assure every impacted individual that investigations will be treated with the utmost confidentiality as allowed by the law. We will keep you updated on our progress.

To each and every one of you, be assured that the Church is Christ’s and He will always watch over us. While we may be dismayed and in disbelief that something like this can happen in our own backyard, we will not allow the actions of a few to despair the many. We raise our hearts and hands in fervent prayer that God may protect each and every one of us from all envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan, the counsel of wicked men and the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, fill our hearts with joy and gladness, instill in our hearts His peace, and focus our spiritual vision towards our salvation and eternity.

His Grace Bishop Mina
July 24th, 2020