



*Office of the Provincial*

August 29, 2018

Dear Friends

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you today as the Provincial of the Marianist Province. The issues of abuse and lack of appropriate response in past decades by some in our Church have once again reached the news. We are all shocked and ashamed of recent revelations. Students entrusted/all individuals entrusted to the care of the Church should feel safe and be safe. As a Church, we must always work toward and ensure a safe environment for our students/families. Our concern must be for those that have been harmed.

In all the places that we minister, we are called to provide a safe atmosphere for all people. We must react with compassion to those that have been abused. We are called to hold them in prayer asking our loving God to be with them.

The Marianists continue to partner with Praesidium, an organization which helps youth-serving organizations (secular and religious) to protect those in their care ([www.praesidiuminc.com](http://www.praesidiuminc.com)). Praesidium is the accrediting body for religious orders of men and assures, from an outside perspective, that we are providing appropriate training and supervision for our members. It is important to state that this is an outside group of devoted lay professionals to assure that there is a careful eye on our policies and procedures. The Marianists were among the first groups to seek accreditation by Praesidium. We continue to receive annual oversight and periodic re-accreditation.

It is important that I stress that we must not only look to the past to see what has been done but that we look to the present and to the future in providing a safe environment.

The Marianists receive on-going training each year to help each of us to have a healthy integrated life and to help one another in providing a safe environment. The training includes how our communities provide for the protection of the young and vulnerable adults. The training is for our newest/youngest members to those advanced in age. The ministries in which we serve also have their own updating and training.

Standards provide that no Marianist who has been credibly accused is allowed to remain in ministry. A review board of lay and Marianist members with experience in law, psychology, and social work advises me on all such matters. Experience has taught us that in these cases, the response needs to be deliberate. Marianists fully comply with all legal requirements.

Religious Orders have learned and continue to learn much about boundary issues and how it is that we work to provide safe environments. We've also learned that it is important to continue to keep vigilant and look at procedures in our communities.

Let us join Pope Francis in his call for prayer and penance, prayer for healing of victims and of the Church. He also went on to state "This can awaken our conscience and arouse our solidarity and commitment to a culture of care that says 'never again' to every form of abuse."

These are difficult days for our Church. These days call us to a time of renewal and purification. A time to truly live what we have promised. A time to celebrate the value and dignity of every person.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Oscar Vasquez, SM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Oscar Vasquez, SM  
Provincial