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**ANNUAL DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING MESSAGE - TO BE READ ALOUD DURING EVERY
MASS OVER THE WEEKEND OF 2ND/3RD DECEMBER 2023**

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

During the recent Synod of Bishops in Rome two consistently expressed themes were the necessity of listening to people and also of accompanying them, including those who have been traumatised by any kind of difficult or confusing experiences. When she acts in this way the Church continues the ministry of Jesus who always listened and accompanied.

There are many reasons why people can be traumatised. One of them is having been wounded by abuse. The Synod recognised that survivors of abuse, and their families, need to be listened to and accompanied. The Church has not always excelled in listening and accompanying. However, we are improving - guided, I believe, by the Holy Spirit.

In our diocese we want to listen and accompany survivors which is why all our priests and deacons, as well as several lay people, received trauma awareness training this year. Understanding the effects of trauma helps us to offer the appropriate pastoral support.

I am grateful to all our clergy and lay faithful who listen to and accompany those who are suffering among us.

Yours in Christ,

Right Reverend Brian McGee
Bishop of Argyll and the Isles