

Protecting God's Children

August 2008

My Dear Parish Family,

We were all shocked and hurt by the Sexual Abuse Scandal that rocked the Church and society some seven years ago. While the scandal focused on priests who have sexually abused children and young people, it was soon realized by many that people from every profession and walk of life could also be and have been abusers and inflicted much pain.

As a priest I can tell you nothing saddens me more or makes me so angry than to know that other priests betrayed the trust given to them and have inflicted so much harm on such innocent people. I am also upset and saddened that the leadership of the Church did not quite know how to handle the situation which caused the scandal and put all of this attention onto the Church. However, we have also seen that this is not just an issue for the Roman Catholic Church, it is also one for Protestant Churches, Synagogues, and other institutions that were founded to help humanity. It was found in the Boy Scouts, in Public Schools, Sports Organizations, etc. It is a problem that has to be dealt with, and we must always be vigilant to make sure it does not happen again. To this end, the *Catholic Bishops of the United States* instituted a charter in June 2002 to insure that it wouldn't happen again. Likewise, when cases do arise and are reported to the Church, Diocesan Officials will act quickly and cooperate with the local law enforcement authorities to make sure our children and young people are protected.

The Charter to Protect Children and Young People was designed to provide a comprehensive approach to preventing and managing child sexual abuse: reporting allegations; providing care for the victims and their families; and to make sure provisions are made to provide safe environments for our children and young people. One of the ways this is done is by requiring every Church Employee and Volunteers to undergo a **Criminal Background Check**. This is true also of all the members of the clergy (Bishops, Priests, and Deacons) and religious orders (Nuns and Brothers). The other way this is done is by having all employees and **volunteers (no matter what their ministry is to participate in the VIRTUS TRAINING SESSIONS)**. At first this Program was geared only toward those who were involved with children or young people or Liturgical Ministry, but it has been extended to all whom work and volunteer in Church Ministry. **So if you are an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, an Usher, Lector, Minister of Consolation, CYO Coach, Outreach Volunteer or whatever ministry, you must have taken the Two and one half to three hour Training Module. As we look back upon our records, we have found that many people who should have taken the Training Program have not yet done so. Happily, many more have and we thank you.** Remember this Program was designed to help you help and protect our children and young people. It is not intended to point fingers or accuse anyone. By sharing in this worthwhile training, you will be better able to spot potential abusers and truly become part of the solution. By making you more aware of how abusers operate you may save a child from being abused.

In a few weeks we will be having our Training Sessions right here at St. Joseph's, this is possible because *Sister Anne Marie, Mike Keller, and myself* have been trained to be facilitators of the program, so we can better serve the parish and help protect our children. While this may be a temporary inconvenience, think of how important it can be to a child. We will inform you of the dates and how to register online for the sessions. If you do not have a computer or access to the Internet please call the Rectory.

Thank you for your help and cooperation as we all strive to protect God's Children.

*God bless you always.
Fr. Mike*

