

**Special points of interest:**

Virtus: New Training Program for Adults

"News from the Director"

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To Protect

Office of Victim Assistance &
Safe Environment

APRIL 2016: National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Child Abuse is a community problem that impacts and damages each one of us, directly or indirectly. Imagine for one moment what it means to be a child living in a situation of fear and danger. Here in our community, we struggle with high child abuse and neglect numbers. However, we can stand up for children and get involved to end the violence.

During the month of April the Archdiocese of San Antonio along with statewide advocacy groups trained children and adults to increase support and awareness of National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Safe Environment Facilitators handed out blue windmill pins to students in religious education classes to remember all those children who have suffered abuse. All students are being taught to report all suspected abuse of children. Together these efforts can make a difference and will continue the promise to protect and the pledge to heal.



APRIL IS NATIONAL
CHILD ABUSE
PREVENTION MONTH

Virtus-Protecting God's Children for Adult Training Implemented

The Archdiocese of San Antonio Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment has implemented the nationally recognized program Virtus-Protecting God's Children for Adults. This new system will give all Safe Environment Facilitators the tools to maintain better records of adults who are trained on child abuse prevention. This program contains live training as well as online training. This will help to ensure that everyone gets trained. Virtus contains two videos which include real life stories of victims of sexual abuse as well as stories of sex offenders. Many facilitators have commented that the videos gives the audience a true connection to the impact of abuse on children. This training program makes the education process very easy for the facilitator. In the future OVASE will be able to implement the training for children as well as combine the Virtus records with the Criminal Background Check records and Sexual Misconduct records. This will give volunteers a one stop shop to ensure compliance with the *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. OVASE has had several trainings on Virtus for facilitators and have several upcoming trainings. Please log on to www.archsa.org click on Child Protection and follow the registration process as a new Virtus user. You can sign up for a facilitator training and we will give you all the details on how to implement the new program. Thanks again to all of our dedicated volunteers who continue to minister our community on child abuse prevention.

Monitoring Ministries to Keep Youth Safe

Several years ago a Safe Environment Coordinator noticed a man sitting in the parish courtyard. She simply said hello and asked if he needed prayer or anything she could help him with. He became very nervous and began to walk away as she asked his name. The next week a child approached the Coordinator who was also the parish DRE and told her a man approached her and tried asking her a few personal questions. The teen did not respond and went to tell her teacher. The teacher then told the DRE. They realized after asking the teen to describe the man that he was the same person the DRE had seen the week before. The DRE and Father walked the parish grounds and found the person again sitting in the same area near the classrooms. They decided to report to authorities and the police were able to search the persons name and he was a registered sex offender. He was told that he could attend mass but could not hang out outside before or after mass as a safety measure. The coordinator had all the teachers speak to the children about child safety and to report any further incidents. It was the precautions taken by the DRE and teen to speak out when they saw a situation that did not seem safe. With this story in mind it is important to always monitor ministries and report any suspicious activity in order to keep our youth safe. If you have any questions about monitoring ministries safety tips please contact OVASE and we are happy to assist.

Teen Trafficking Prevention

Does your ministry include working with teens? If so, you play an important role in identifying and preventing sex trafficking in your community. When observing or interacting with teens do you notice the following:

- ♦ Do you see suspicious injuries on a teen? When you ask about the injuries, is there a plausible explanation?
- ♦ Does the teen seem to be dependent on another person or afraid to be away from an older male or female “friend”?
- ♦ Does the teen avoid answering questions or refer an older “friend” to answer questions?
- ♦ Does the teen seem to be in good health or does he or she appear tired, depressed, or sad?

If you answered yes to any of these questions you can be in contact with a teen who is a victim of human trafficking.

What is human trafficking? Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. It is the illegal trade in human beings through abduction, the use or threat of force, deception, fraud, or sale for the purposes of sexual exploitation for forced labor. Victims include women, men, and especially teens. According to the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault there are between 600,000 and 800,000 people trafficked across international borders annually. About 14,500 –17,500 people are trafficked in the US annually. On September 1, 2003 the 78th Texas State Legislature passed HB 2096 which prohibits human trafficking.

Don't be afraid to ask the teen about themselves and what you are seeing. Sit and listen to the teen; many times they don't realize they are in this situation. The adult is going to make it seem like they are in a relationship and then manipulate or force the teen in to this situation. This teen may attend school, church activities, and seem to be a normal teenager, yet they are living a secret life where they are exploited. They tend to move from place to place so many times they go unnoticed. Get the teen help and report any abuse including exploitation to authorities. Let the child know that they are not alone and have rights as well as free will to live a healthy life free of abuse.

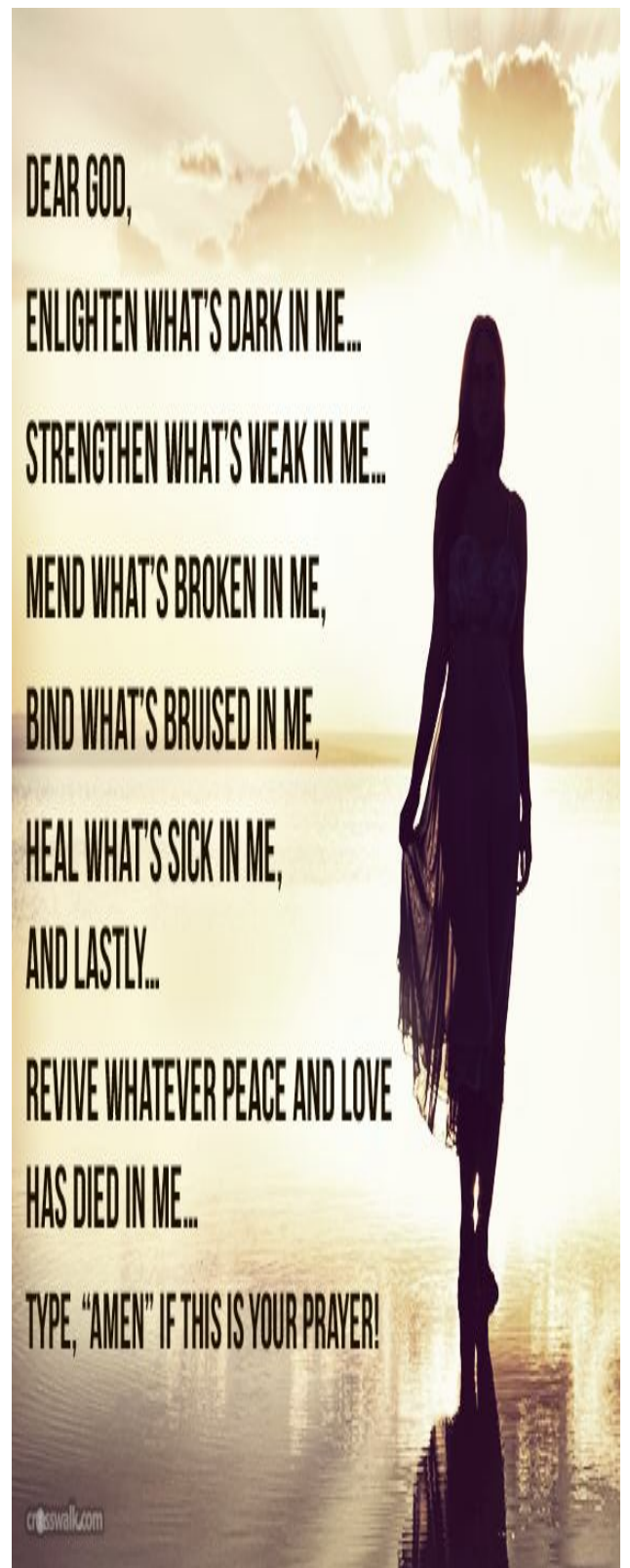
The Power of Prayer & Spiritually Based Recovery Heals Childhood Trauma

Many adults live with childhood wounds. Such trauma in childhood has many hurtful effects especially on the soul of an individual. These adults function everyday at work, home, and public but deep down there are secrets of child abuse. There may be individuals who have completely blocked out the memories of abuse but still manifest in their daily lives. At some point and time a smell, sound, color, or incident triggers a quick flashback and the emotions become overwhelming for the survivor. Some people describe it like a slap in the face. Now the individual is finding themselves asking how do I deal with these feelings?

After fifteen years of experience working with numerous survivors of childhood abuse the power of prayer and building ones spirituality can increase humility, inner strength, acceptance of self and others, harmony, peace, serenity, gratitude, forgiveness, and a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Spirituality growth through the power of faith is a stage where survivors are able to regain a sense of equilibrium in their lives. This involves coming to terms with the losses they have experience, regaining a sense of control, re-establishing trust, re-defining their future, finding meaning again.

Toward the end of this difficult journey of spiritual healing, survivors discover that the most difficult and painful experiences in their lives were the very experiences that revealed their greatest strengths and deepest character. It is amazing to see their walk with Christ allows the healing of the inner child and become a person who thrives in this world.



Scheduled Training

May June July

4th St. Paul Community Center-Annex 6pm-7pm Safe Environment Training	28th St. Paul Community Center-Annex 1pm-4pm Virtus Facilitator Training	26th St. Paul Community Center-Annex 1pm-4pm Virtus Facilitator Training
18th St. Paul Community Center-Annex 6pm-7pm Safe Environment Training	30th St. Paul Community Center-Annex 9:30am-4pm Virtus New Facilitator Training	28th St. Paul Community Center-Annex 9:30am-4pm Virtus New Facilitator Training
26th St. Paul Community Center-Annex 9am-12pm Virtus Facilitator Training		

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

This has been an exciting year for the Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment. As you have read within this newsletter, we have completely changed to Protecting God's Children through Virtus. This nationally recognized program allows us to have a consistent message of abuse prevention at every parish and school.

I understand that change is sometimes scary and this is a pretty huge change. However, change provides us an exciting opportunity to grow as a ministry. If you are a Safe Environment Coordinator for your parish or school and have not received the Virtus training, please contact OVASE to update you on this system. The Archdiocese of San Antonio will no longer use the old training method, so update your training method by contacting OVASE. If you are not a Coordinator, visit our website to register for a Virtus training.

More great news; OVASE received \$35000 from the Archbishop's Appeal. These funds will be used to purchase abuse prevention educational materials for adults, parents, youth, and children. It is such a great honor to be a recipient of the AA funds. Thank you for all those who donated to this great cause. These funds assist this ministry in getting the message of abuse prevention throughout the Archdiocese.

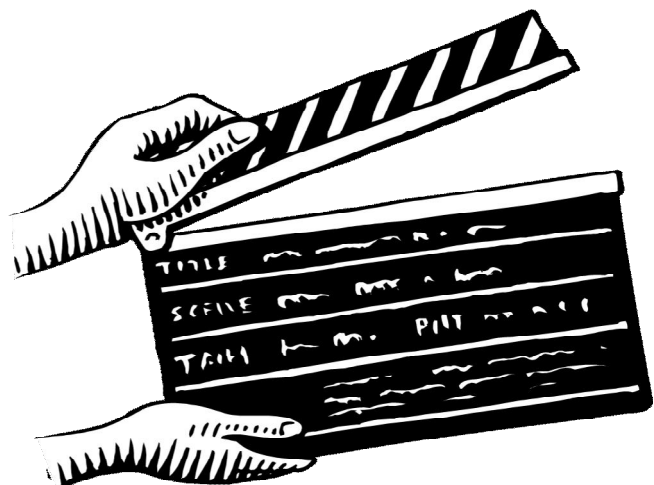
This year we will be having our onsite audit by the USCCB. Each year every diocese is audited by an independent group to ensure that we are following

the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. We will soon have the dates of this three day audit. Parishes and schools will be audited. Make sure that your location has completed its training and its background checks. Give us a call if you have any questions.

Protecting children and youth is something that we all must prioritize. We are all in this fight together,

Thank you,

-Steve Martinez





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