

To Protect

Office of Victim Assistance
& Safe Environment



Special points of interest:

S.E.E.D.s

Falling for Christ

Children's Safe Environment

Director's Cut

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Safe Environment

Education Days

"He will SOAR with you"

October is SAFE ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION DAYS
(S.E.E.D.s)

This year we have Make-&-Take Paper Airplanes available for all Safe Environment Coordinators to pick up and distribute to the children at your school or parish!

TWO DAYS ONLY:

October 16 & 17, 2018

Between the hours of 10am and 2pm.

135 Barilla Place

****PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE BEFORE OCT. 12th TO RESERVE
YOUR TIME SLOT FOR PICK UP ****

FALLing for Christ

Now that we have entered the Fall season, everyone has begun focusing on the exciting autumn things that lie ahead. We are obsessed with pumpkin spice lattes, decorating with mini pumpkins, and the fall sweaters and furry boots we now get to wear. We think of the leaves changing color and the splendor of nature this time of year. We consider the cooler weather and consider it as a much needed reprieve from the hard summer heat.

However, autumn also hints at a time of death, a time of ending, and a season of finishing. The leaves and plants that once thrived during summer have now come to the end of their life. The heat, which once warmed our bodies, has now turned cold and leads to the death of many living things. The bright, warm sunshine is now replaced often times by rain and cloudy days that hold a chill and dampness in the air. Autumn indicates the close proximity of the onset of winter, a time of death for nearly all plants and many animals in our world.

Autumn does still hint at a time of beauty; it signals the rebirth that will occur once more after the old leaves and plants have died away. The old must die and pass away, so that in the spring the new will be able to be born and grow. The vibrant reds and yellows must fade to brown, so that the green may come once more.

In the same way, we have been called to a spiritual death that will lead to our rebirth. Just like with fall, we often get caught up in the unimportant aspects of spirituality and do not dwell on its true meaning. We become concerned with attending the perfect church, dating the perfect Catholic partner, reading our Bible for enough time each day, and we forget that ultimately we have been asked to die ourselves daily. The kind of Christian music we listen to has as much to do with true Christianity as drinking a pumpkin spice latte has to do with the true meaning of fall. Luke 9:23 says, "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'"

Just as fall signals death and coming to the end of something, so we should consider this time in our spiritual lives to die to ourselves and reach the end of ourselves. We must forfeit our lives, our sin, our independence, and learn to rely on Christ alone.

But what an amazing promise we have. If we do die to ourselves, if we are crucified with Christ, then we will receive a new life. We no longer live in the flesh, but by faith in Christ. Just as in the fall the old plants and leaves die in order to make way for new growth in the spring, we die to ourselves in order to make way for the new person Christ is cultivating in us. The sinful man and his desires must be put to death in order that the new man with the desires of the spirit may control our lives. So consider this time of death and rebirth as an opportunity to put to death the things of your flesh and embrace the things of the spirit. For just as the leaves of fall must die and pass away in order for the season to continue in their course, we cannot continue in our spiritual journey until we have truly crucified the desires of our flesh; it is a chose we must make daily, long after fall has ended.

Children's Safe Environment Training Messages

By Mary Jane Doerr, Associate Director, Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection

As schools launch a new academic year, millions of children also are set to learn the ABC's of child protection.

1. **Abuse is never a child's fault**, a point that children need to hear over and over again. Offenders try hard to make children feel complicit in the abuse or to blame them for the abuse. Children learn that this is never true! The blame **always** belongs to the adult who is taking advantage of a child's trust and vulnerabilities.
2. **God loves children forever and wants them to live holy and happy lives.** If a child has been sexually abused, that child learns they are still innocent and loved by God and their families. The shame of child sexual abuse needs to be put where it belongs: on the abuser.
3. **Abuse that has happened should be reported.** Children learn to tell a parent or another trusted adult if someone is hurting them and to keep telling until they are believed. One study shows that children tell of their abuse an average of nine times before someone believes them. Parents can help children learn whom they can trust by pointing out the adults who can be trusted. Parents can also teach children the correct names of private body parts. This simple step gives children the vocabulary to tell others what happened to them.
4. **You can recognize abuse when it happens.** Children learn to trust that feeling that says something isn't right and to tell a parent or other trusted adult when something happens that makes them feel uneasy. Children learn to question if someone is telling them to do what the child doesn't like but says it is because he loves the child. Children learn to tell parents or trusted adult if another person makes them sad or confused or tries to get them to break rules. This can stop the process of grooming by which an abuser lures a child toward danger. A child who questions another's inappropriate behavior can send a message to the offender that this child is not an easy target, but one that will tell what is being done to him/her.
5. **There are ways to spot a grooming process.** Offenders are willing to spend a great deal of time grooming the family, the child and even the community so they may be seen as a trusted family friend. Children learn that anyone who lets children break rules, gives them alcohol or shows them pornography needs to be reported to parents and other trusted adults. Children learn not to keep secrets from parents. They learn that they should tell parents when someone gives them special gifts or is always touching them or tickling them and says not to tell.
6. **Parents or other trusted adults will talk about this subject.** Children often try to protect their parents from bad news, so they need to learn they can tell their parents anything. This lesson is conveyed when parents stay involved in their children's activities and talk with them about what is happening in their lives. This is how children learn what can be shared with parents. The more effective safe environment programs include parents in the learning process. This gives the child a clear signal that this subject is not off limits but instead is something to be talked about with family members.
7. **Boundaries exist.** Learning about personal boundaries can protect children and their knowing boundaries reinforces the teaching to listen to ones instincts. Children who listen to the voice that says, This doesn't feel right, can protect themselves.
8. **Children can stand up for themselves.** Children need to be respectful and obey, yet at the same time need to know there are times when it is okay to say not to an adult. Children learn when it is appropriate for them to say, No, stop doing that. For example, they hear they can say no to someone who makes them uncomfortable, shows them pornography, or offers them alcohol.
9. **There are ways to explain inappropriate behavior.** Children learn how to describe what's happening when someone is doing something that just seems a little weird even though it may not seem wrong. The ability to articulate what has happened to a child enables a child to more easily confide in a parent or other trusted adult. This can alert the adult to a potentially dangerous situation so it can be avoided. This is ultimately the goal of safe environment education.

S.E.E.D.s

Safe Environment Education Days Tips

- ◆ Always ask your parents for permission
- ◆ You have the right to say "No"
 - ◆ Never keep a secret
 - ◆ Never travel alone
- ◆ Do not give personal information over the internet
- ◆ Tell a trusted person when someone makes you feel uncomfortable
- ◆ Don't forget to pray when you are scared

Scheduled Training

Please contact your Safe Environment Coordinator at your Parish for a list of Scheduled Training.

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

This has been a rocky month at the Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment and a tough month to be a Catholic. The Catholic Church has survived a great deal of scandal in the past, but this one has been different. The Pennsylvania news has been brutal and shocking for everyone. It has left many of us angry and frustrated. The clergy abuse crisis should be over! Somehow the lies and abuse have continued. To make things worse, one of the accused priests had ties to a high school in San Antonio.

Though we are angry and fed up with all of the negative attention, we must use this time as a reminder of the importance of the ministry we are all doing to protect children throughout our community. We must continue to be diligent on our commitment on our mission to create a safe environment where everyone is safe from harm.

Within our Archdiocese, we have done the best we can to be transparent and honest. Our current leadership, including Archbishop Gustavo, do not tolerate these behaviors. It's been a learning process, for everyone involved, however, the Archdiocese is moving in the right direction. The Archdiocese is following the guidelines set forth by the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and we are following local reporting laws.

This is a difficult time, but through time and faith, healing will begin. We must stay strong and committed to ensuring that our Church will not allow these actions to continue.

Hopefully before the end of the year, we will have a new Sexual Misconduct Policy. This has been years in the making, but we are currently in the final steps of completing the document. It will be called the Code of Conduct for the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Once completed, everyone will need to read the document. A plan for disseminating the policy will be created soon.

I would like to thank all those who have worked hard during this year to ensure that children are protected from harm. Your continued dedication towards this ministry is an inspiration. Thank You!!!

-Steve Martinez, LCSW, LSOTP





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