



SEX ABUSE:

What Parents, Catechists and Parish Catechetical Leaders Can Do *and* How to Talk with Children

Catechetical Office
Archdiocese of Newark



Fall 2018

**We cannot undo the actions of the
past, but we shall remain
vigilant to ensure that not one
child will ever be abused
on our watch.**

New Jersey's Catholic dioceses have conducted some 380,000 criminal background checks of all diocesan and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors. In addition, all Catholic dioceses have integrated a comprehensive program of reporting abuse to civil authorities, compensating and counseling victims, implementing rigorous protocols, and training for more than 2.3 million clergy, employees, volunteers, and children.

We thank law enforcement agencies, child protection advocates, and victims themselves who have helped us move beyond compliance to creating the safest environments for learning and worship. We are deeply thankful for those who have joined our efforts to extend both healing and hope to every victim and their family. We renew our commitment to foster healing and seek forgiveness.

*-from Statement of the Roman Catholic
Bishops of New Jersey, August 25, 2018*

*Parish Catechetical Leaders, Catechists
and Volunteers in Parish Catechetical
Programs participate in **Protecting God's
Children®** for Adults, a training pro-
gram conducted by **Virtus®** that edu-
cates participants to be aware of the
signs of child sexual abuse, the methods
and means by which offenders commit
abuses, and five easy steps one can use
to prevent child sexual abuse.*

A Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong
always present, always just;
You gave your only Son
to save us by his Blood on the Cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed
in them.

Hear the cries of our
brothers and sisters
who have been gravely harmed,
and the cries of those who love them.
Soothe their restless hearts with hope,
steady their shaken spirits with faith.
Grant them justice for their cause,
enlightened by your truth.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness into
wholeness.
Grant us the courage and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Breathe wisdom into
our prayers and labors.
Grant that all harmed by abuse
might find peace in justice.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

*-from U.S. Conference on Catholic Bishops
Charter for the Protection of Children
and Young People*

What You Can Do to Protect Children

Parishes and parents are on the front lines when it comes to protecting children from sexual abuse. There are steps you can take to protect your own children and others too:

- **Get educated about child sex abuse.** *Look at statistics and learn more about the problem*
- **Minimize opportunities for abuse** *Find out how sexual predators groom potential victims. Think carefully about any settings/situations your children will be in*
- **Teach children to recognize sexual abuse and report it** *Children should know it's "against the rules" for adults to touch them improperly*
- **Learn to recognize signs that a child is being abused** *Emotional and behavioral signs are more common than physical signs*
- **Make sure all places are safe for your children.** *Schools, clubs, teams, and medical clinics are potential venues for abuse— be sure they have implemented a comprehensive sexual abuse policy*
- **Do not be afraid to speak up, even to Church leaders.** *Under church law you have the right and responsibility to bring concerns about these matters to the attention of the clergy*

For more info
about the points above
[CLICK HERE](#)

Talking to Older Children & Teens about Abuse

There is no reason not to be completely upfront with mature older children and teens. Explaining the situation to them honestly and forthrightly will help them come to terms with the reality in the light of their own faith and answer challenges from friends and critics who see the scandal as a definitive rebuke of Catholicism.

Remind them that the sins (and hypocritical behavior) of some Church leaders does not change the fundamental truths of the faith. No amount of hypocrisy or sinfulness on the part of Church leaders invalidates the fundamental truth of the Good News. In time we can discover that God can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures. Just as the world rejected God's only Son, God brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. (CCC 395)

This truth is going to be easier for teens to accept if they already have a strong personal relationship with Christ. A good long-range goal for the parents of younger children, then, is to help them develop that relationship by teaching them to pray from the heart, in a personal way, either verbally or through meditations. It is that living relationship with Christ that keeps us in the Church, not a sense of obligation or the sanctity of it's members.

-Adapted from the
Blog: PB & Grace,
Gracewatch Media
by Jerry Windley-Daost



Practice H.E.L.P.

Hear them out

This is not always easy to do, but in the end they will feel better. We have all been there; sometimes a person just needs to express themselves. Let them talk, and simply listen.

Empathize

Feel what the person is feeling by putting yourself in their shoes. Name their emotions: "I understand that you are frustrated, and I can see why. I would be too." By showing you understand, you can begin to defuse the situation.

Listen and Apologize

This one is important, especially if you did not personally create the situation. The last thing the person wants to hear is that you did not do it. A simple "I'm sorry" can go a long way.

Plan a Course of Action

Make sure you have an action plan ready to follow your apology. What are you doing to help fix the problem? It will probably sound something like, "I'm so sorry that this has happened. Here is what my school is doing to prevent this in the future..."

There may come a time where the situation will call for professional help such as the authorities, counselling, or other mental health services. Be prepared to suggest additional resources.

If you suspect a child is in imminent danger of abuse, call 911 immediately.

To report known or suspected child abuse call the DCF 24-Hour Abuse Hotline: 1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873) Secondly, call the Archdiocese at (973) 497-4186

[For more Resources](#)
[CLICK HERE HERE](#)