

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Since the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops established the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles has embraced its responsibilities to insure the safety of our children and young people and to provide a compassionate response to victims of abuse in need of justice and healing.

Pope Francis calls us as the People of God to continue our efforts "...to take all the necessary measures to protect in every way the lives of our children." An important way we answer this call is by annually providing the *Working Together to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse* brochure as a quick guide to introduce you to the Archdiocese's child sexual abuse prevention policies, programs and resources that are the foundation of our ongoing efforts and commitment to protect our children and young people.

Over the past fifteen years, the Office of Safeguard the Children has trained 329,000 adults and over 1.4 million children through VIRTUS® Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Awareness Programs and the Fingerprinting Office has background checked 168,000 adults who work or volunteer with or around children.

Let us continue to pray for those who have been hurt by the misconduct of members of the Church. I am grateful for the ongoing outreach, support and healing provided to them through our Office of Victims Assistance Ministry.

I entrust all our children and families to the tender care and protection of our Blessed Mother Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of the Angels.

+ José H. Gomez

Most Reverend José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles

"Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated."

(Pope Francis Letter on Zero Tolerance - December, 2016)

Implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was adopted by the Bishops of the United States in June 2002. This important document contains the Essential Norms which are the Church's response to child sexual abuse and the foundation for a concrete plan to pro-actively prevent child sexual abuse. Key components of the implementation of the *Charter* in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles include:

Office of Safeguard the Children and Safeguard the Children Parish Committees

The establishment of the Office of Safeguard the Children and formation of Safeguard the Children Parish Committees has been mandated since 2002. The Office of Safeguard the Children assists these permanent Parish Committees in implementing child sexual abuse prevention education, Safe Environment policies, procedures and resources. For information: www.archla.org/safeguard

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education for Adults

VIRTUS® "Protecting God's Children" is a three-hour training for adults which teaches the "Five Steps of Child Sexual Abuse Prevention." They are:

- Know the Warning Signs
- Control Access
- Monitor all Programs and Ministries
- Be Aware
- Communicate Your Concerns

This program is mandated for all adults who work or volunteer with and around children or youth on a regular basis. Over 329,000 clergy, staff, volunteers and parents have attended the program. For information: www.virtusonline.org

Children & Youth Abuse Prevention Programs

The VIRTUS® Teaching Touching Safety Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program has been adapted by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to **"empower"** children and young people to protect themselves from child sexual abuse by learning about such topics as:

- The Five Body Safety Rules & Safe Adults
- Boundaries, Bullying & Cyber Bullying and Telling Someone You Trust
- Internet and Technology Safety & Creating and Following Rules

Recognizing that parents are the "primary educators" of their children, these programs encourage parent involvement in reinforcing what their children have learned by providing: a parent-child take home exercise for each lesson, VIRTUS® bulletins and other resources. For information: (213) 637-7460 or www.archla.org/safeguard

Archdiocese of Los Angeles Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Policies

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has implemented rigorous policies and procedures to provide a safe environment in our parishes and parish schools for all children and young people. These include:

- "Zero Tolerance"
- Guidelines for Adults Interacting with Minors at the Parish/School Activities or Events
- Code of Conduct for Middle and High School Students Volunteering with Minors

To view these and other policies:

<http://handbook.la-archdiocese.org/chapter-9>

"Did You Know" Bulletin Announcements

Sunday parish bulletins contain weekly **"Did You Know"** excerpts from articles on child and youth safety. For complete articles: <http://www.la-archdiocese.org/protecting/Pages/VIRTUS-Current-Online-Articles.aspx>