



DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND
SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Dear Priests, Principals, DRE's & Youth Ministry,

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. At the Diocese of Fort Wayne - South Bend, we recommit to safeguarding children and young people in full alignment with the ***Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People***, established by the **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**.

We encourage all parishes, schools, and ministries to:

- Affirm commitment to safe environment policies
- Provide safe environment training to children and youth
- Share reporting information visibly with families
- Pray for survivors and continued healing in the Church

The Charter reminds us that safe environments are built not only through policies, but through people who are attentive, informed, and committed to doing what is right. Let us use this month as a time of renewed dedication to the promises we have made and continue to uphold.

We have a toolkit for Priests, parish/school educators, and youth ministry that includes Homily Helps, suggested general intercessions for survivors of abuse, a prayer for healing from the USCCB, and a Rosary guide for healing and protection. There additional resources located on the diocesan website at <https://diocesefwsb.org/prevent-child-abuse>.

May the Holy Spirit guide us as we strive to ensure that every parish, school, and ministry in our diocese reflects the safety, dignity, and love that every child deserves. Together, we create safe, nurturing, and faith-filled environments for every child.

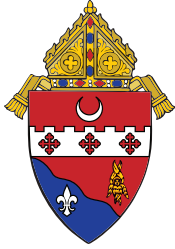
Blessings,

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HOMILY HELPS-TALKING POINTS

- Throughout the Gospel, Christ calls upon His followers to care for the most vulnerable among us, especially children. Our faith also calls for us to uphold the value of human life and the dignity of the human person. The protection of children is the responsibility of the entire Church, including the faithful.
- During Child Abuse Prevention Month, we are reminded of the call to be instruments of justice, working for the common good of all, which includes the protection of children. As Jesus entrusts to Peter the care of the flock, we are reminded that this responsibility belongs to everyone as a matter of charity and justice. Child Abuse Prevention Month should lead to heightened awareness of the need to be vigilant about providing a safe environment for all within the Church and for our communities.
- Recent statistics tell us one out of every four girls, and one out of every six boys, are assaulted before they turn 18. If those statistics are correct, every Sunday in our congregation there are people who have been abused and are feeling the pain of that abuse. Reaching out to all victims of abuse is critical in bringing hope and the love of Christ to them. Our diocese is here to provide anyone suffering from abuse with steps towards healing.
- We are all part of a larger culture of protection and healing within the Church. As members of this culture, we value the prevention of abuse and the support of those who have been abused. Each of us can play an important role in strengthening this culture. For example, we can better prevent abuse by ensuring that the signs of abuse are identified and reported when first noticed. Noticing these warning signs, taking them seriously, and reporting them could prevent abuse in the future. We can also play a role in victim outreach by offering support, compassion, and prayers to those close to us who have been abused. The importance we place on carrying out these acts of charity will go a long way in creating a culture within our Church where children are safe and victim survivors find healing.



Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

Suggested general intercessions for survivors of abuse

We hope you will consider including one or more of these or similar petitions during the Prayers of the Faithful at parish liturgies during the month of April. If you have questions regarding these petitions, or you encounter an individual who would like to engage in a personal conversation about abuse in his or her own life or the life of a loved one, we are available for pastoral support. Please contact the Office of Victim's Assistance at 260-399-1447 or the Office of Pastoral Care at 260-399-1458.

- That the Holy Spirit will guide Church leaders as they promote justice and healing for victims and survivors of abuse.
- That our Holy Father Pope Leo XIV may fulfill his role as good shepherd and protect the most vulnerable in his flock.
- That all civic leaders might act in ways that show their commitment to the protection of all, especially young people.
- That all who work with children and young adults would be vigilant in protecting them from harm.
- That God might grant to those affected by any type of abuse the courage to tell their story and seek healing.
- That all families would strive to provide safe and nurturing environments for children and young adults
- That those who have been abused experience Christ's profound love for them and God's healing grace.
- That God our Merciful Father would bring comfort and healing to victims and survivors of sexual abuse within the Church.
- That those who provide help for the abused act with wisdom and compassion in their healing ministry.
- That all priests and consecrated religious, through their teaching and witness, lead young people to holiness.
- That bishops would continue to carry out their promise to protect, and pledge to heal, the most vulnerable in their dioceses.
- That parish communities affected by abuse find healing and reconciliation through the Blessed Virgin Mary

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 may find peace in justice.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

A Rosary for Healing & Protection



Together, we can ensure that all children are safe from sexual abuse and can provide assistance and support to victims who are on the path to healing.

You can help in these efforts by offering your prayers for healing and protection.

This rosary will help you to lift up their needs in prayer, offering them to God through Mary who offers her loving protection to all her children.

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
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How to Pray the Rosary

† Make the Sign of the Cross. Holding the crucifix, say the Apostles Creed.

† On the first bead, say an Our Father.

† Say one Hail Mary on each of the next three beads, one for Faith, one for Hope, and one for Charity. Say the Glory Be.

† Go to the main part of the rosary. For each of the five decades, announce the Mystery, then say the Our Father. On each of the small beads of the decade, next say ten Hail Marys while meditating on the Mystery. Then say a Glory Be. (After finishing each decade, some say the following prayer requested by the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to heaven, especially those who have most need of your mercy.")

† After saying the five decades, say the Salve Regina (Hail, Holy Queen), followed by this dialogue and prayer:

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. O God, whose only-begotten Son, by his life, Death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech thee, that while meditating on these mysteries of the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body
and life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
and forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail, Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory Be

Glory be to the Father
and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning
is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.

Joyful Mysteries

Said on Mondays and Saturdays

The Annunciation

"Then the angel said to [Mary], 'Do not be afraid.'" (Lk 1:30)

The angel Gabriel greeted Mary with words to calm her fears. God wants everyone, especially the most vulnerable, to live in his peace, free from all fear and pain. It is our responsibility, as children of our loving God, to create an environment in which our children can grow up free from fear of those who might hurt or abuse them.

The Visitation

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord." (Lk 1:46)

After receiving the news that she would become the mother of God's Son, Mary's first action was one of compassion. She went to her kinswoman, Elizabeth, and offered aid and comfort. Following her example, we must reach out to those around us in need of hope and healing, offering our assistance and patience as they embrace God's healing love.

The Nativity of the Lord

"She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Lk 2:7)

Jesus, the Son of God, entered the world as a vulnerable child. He was not counted among the great and powerful, instead lying in a manger. We are called to protect all those who are vulnerable, especially children, by providing them with safe places to live and grow.

The Presentation

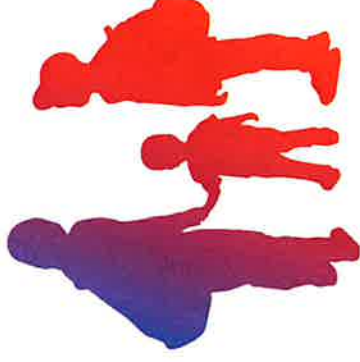
"You yourself a sword will pierce so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Lk 2:35)

The experience of child sexual abuse is shattering and can make a person feel as if his or her heart and world is torn asunder. We pray for those victims who are seeking healing and strength. Their path is challenging, but our loving support can make it easier.

Finding the Child Jesus in the Temple

"His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.'" (Lk 2:48)

Child sexual abuse affects not only the victim, but his or her family as well. Our healing efforts must extend to these family members, to alleviate their pain and anxiety and help them to grow ever closer to God's healing love.



Luminous Mysteries

Said on Thursdays

Baptism by John

"A voice came from the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'" (Mt 3:17)

Every child is beloved by God, precious in his sight. There is no room in the Church for those who would harm children, betraying their trust and destroying their innocence. All members of the Church must do their part to make the Church and society safe for children.

Wedding at Cana

"Jesus said to her, 'Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servers, 'Do whatever he tells you.'" (Jn 2:4-5)

A guest at a wedding in Cana, Jesus' mother stepped in to assist the couple in their time of need. We must follow her example by taking active steps to come to the aid of children who are at risk of abuse, to be vigilant in protecting them, and to advocate on behalf of those who become victims.

Preaching of the Kingdom and Call to Conversion
"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mk 1:15)

Jesus boldly preached the coming of God's kingdom, reminding his hearers of the need to conform their lives to God's laws. As members of God's Church, we must boldly remind all elements of society of the need to protect children and young people. The message may not be welcomed, but it is essential.

The Transfiguration

"[Jesus] was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light." (Mt 17:2)

In his Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John saw Jesus as he truly is in all his divine glory. So must we see victims of sexual abuse as they are – the precious children of God, worthy of dignity and respect. We must do all that we can to aid in their healing and to assure them of the love of God and his people.

Institution of the Eucharist

"This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." ... "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." (Lk 22:19-20)

In the gift of the Eucharist, Jesus makes present his sacrifice of redeeming love. This sacrifice makes us whole as one Body of Christ. We pray that Jesus may heal all the wounds of his Body, most especially the wounds caused by the sexual abuse of children and young people.



Sorrowful Mysteries

Said on Tuesdays and Fridays

Agony in the Garden

"He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground." (Lk 22:44)
Many victims of child sexual abuse suffer in silence for years, wrestling alone with the agony of their memories and pain. We pray that the Church may always be a place where they can come to share their stories, be received in love and compassion, and be supported on the path to healing.

Scourging at the Pillar

"Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged." (Jn 19:1)

The experience of child sexual abuse may leave scars no less profound than the scars of a scourging, though they often remain unseen. We must strive to make our parish communities places where victims can feel safe to share their burdens and to find healing and peace.

Crowning with Thorns

"And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they struck him repeatedly." (Jn 19:2-3)

Those who have survived sexual abuse may feel isolated from the community, set apart and unwelcome. Jesus must have felt the same as the soldiers mocked and tortured him. As members of Christ's Body, the Church, we are called to see Christ in our brothers and sisters in need and offer them our aid, comfort, and support.

Carrying the Cross

"They pressed into service a passer-by, Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross." (Mk 15:21)

Simon helped Jesus carry his cross, helping him bear the weight and the burden. So must we help victims of child sexual abuse bear the weight and burden of their experiences, helping them to find healing in God who is light and life.

The Crucifixion

"Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit'; and when he had said this he breathed his last." (Lk 23:46)

We commend into God's hands all those who are at risk for child sexual abuse, those who are doing the hard work of healing, and those who are not yet ready to begin the healing process. Through our prayers, efforts, and sacrifices, may they come to know the peace and wholeness that only God can bring.



Glorious Mysteries

Said on Sundays and Wednesdays

The Resurrection

"Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised." (Lk 24:5-6)

The Father's gift of healing is a wondrous thing, bringing new life and hope from what was pain and despair. We pray for all victims of child sexual abuse, that they may come to abundant new life in the Risen Lord.

The Ascension into Heaven

"As [the apostles] were looking on, [Jesus] was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight." (Acts 1:9)

Jesus ascended into heaven in the presence of his Apostles, making them his witnesses to the whole world. We too are called to be witnesses, speaking on behalf of vulnerable children and young people and helping to build a society where they are safe from those who would steal their trust and their innocence.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

"They were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim." (Acts 2:4)

The Spirit brought the Apostles the gift of courage. No longer did they hide behind locked doors in the upper room, seeking their own safety. Rather, they boldly went out into the city proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and calling the people to repentance in his name. In the same way, we must boldly speak out to protect children and to create environments where they can grow and learn in safety.

The Assumption

"The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God." (Rv 12:6)

At the end of her earthly life, Mary was assumed into heaven, body and soul. Since she carried the Son of God in her body, her body was taken to heaven to share in the full glory of her Son. We pray for those victims of child sexual abuse who seek healing and wholeness, that Mary will present them to her Son who alone makes us whole.

The Crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven

"I will make your name renowned through all generations; thus nations shall praise you forever." (Ps 45:18)

As the Mother of our Redeemer, Mary was crowned as Queen of Heaven. From heaven, she intercedes for us as a loving mother. We entrust into her maternal care all vulnerable children and young people, praying that she will intercede on their behalf and keep them safe from all harm.



Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.

Be our defense against
the wickedness and snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
and do thou,

O Prince of the heavenly hosts,
by the power of God,
thrust into hell Satan,
and all evil spirits,
who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
our life, our sweetness and our hope.

To thee you do we cry,
poor banished children of Eve.

To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning
and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn
then, most gracious advocate,
thine eyes of mercy towards us,
and after this our exile

show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb,
Jesus.

O clement, O loving,
O sweet Virgin Mary.



Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection



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