

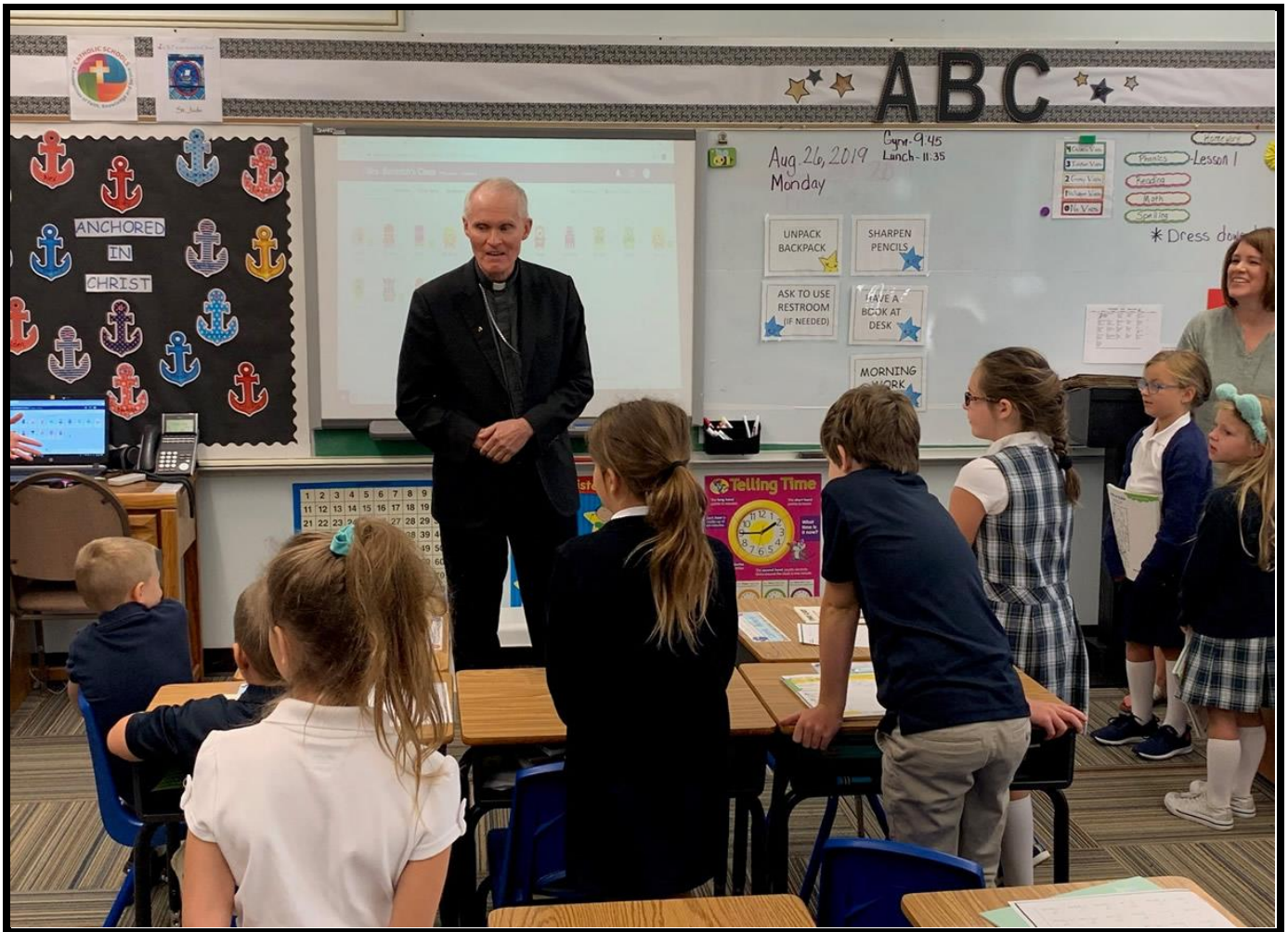


Safe Environment

Diocese of Wheeling - Charleston

Fall 2019

Welcome, Bishop Mark Brennan!



Newly-installed Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Bishop Mark Brennan visits students at Our Lady of Peace School in Wheeling. Thank you, Bishop Brennan, for spending part of your very first week in the Diocese visiting our wonderful Catholic schools. *(Photo by Tim Bishop, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston)*

Safe Environment Is Everyone's Responsibility

St. Vincent de Paul Parish is a beautiful and spacious brick church tucked away on Marshall Avenue in the Elm Grove neighborhood of Wheeling. At the helm at St. Vincent's is Msgr. Paul Hudock. The Office of Safe Environment recently had the privilege of working with Msgr. Hudock in preparation for our on-site audit process. If you ever have an occasion to visit St. Vincent's, you will notice that the weekly bulletin contains the standard-issue Safe Environment

reporting announcement that is required of all our parishes. It's the headline over the reporting announcement at this particular parish that carries the impact: **"Creating a Safe Environment Is Everyone's Responsibility."** Indeed it is. Just like music, hospitality, stewardship, youth, and buildings & properties (just to name a few), Safe Environment is a ministry, and anyone can very easily participate.

If you are an **employee** or **volunteer** within the Diocese, adherence to the Safe Environment protocol is required: completion of a background check, completion of awareness

training, and receipt and review of the Sex Abuse Policy. But even if you are not an employee or volunteer, you can still raise your situational awareness and help keep children and vulnerable adults safe by:



Paying attention to your surroundings.

Become familiar with your physical surroundings so that you can quickly and easily see if something or someone is out of place or just doesn't seem right considering the circumstance, location, or activity. Put your cell phone away for a minute and give some of your attention to details. It is often in these details where we might notice something is amiss.

Using your senses.

What do you see, hear, smell, or feel? Is it typical and appropriate for your surroundings or does it seem out of place or unusual based on the circumstances?

Developing relationships.

Get to know the people at the places you regularly go. You might be pleasantly surprised at the things you learn when you spend a few minutes chatting with someone. And knowing a bit about someone may help you determine when things just aren't right or when someone may need help.

Saying something if you see something.

All of the above points don't mean anything if you do not report your concerns. If you have reason to believe something bad has happened or is happening, the civil authorities are always the best place to start.

Let's take the headline in the bulletin at St. Vincent's to heart ... **Safe Environment Is Everyone's Responsibility!**

Results of 2019 On-Site Audit Remain Pending



A great big **THANK YOU** to everyone who worked so hard preparing for the 2019 on-site Safe Environment audit. Presently, we are still waiting for the official results to be delivered to Bishop Brennan. The following locations were audited on-site back in July: Central Catholic High School, Wheeling; St. Michael's Parish and School, Wheeling; St. Francis de Sales Parish and School, Morgantown; St. Luke's, Cheat Lake; and St. James, Charles Town. In addition, St. Vincent de Paul Parish and School leaders in Wheeling participated in the audit interview process. All other aspects of Safe Environment for our Diocese also were comprehensively audited, and we will share the overall consensus of the report once it is received from Stonebridge Business Partners, the audit agency.

Frequently Asked Questions ...

Lately, the Office of Safe Environment has received some consistent inquiries from throughout the Diocese. Here are the answers to the most frequently asked questions we received over the summer:



How many times does the Diocese require employees and volunteers to take VIRTUS training?

Completion of awareness training for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is one time for regular employees and volunteers. VIRTUS is our Diocese's awareness training provider. Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Catholic school principals, Catholic school teachers, and Directors of Religious Education are required to complete awareness training one time and then complete monthly awareness bulletins through their online VIRTUS accounts. All other employees and volunteers not mentioned above complete the training one time and are done with training.

How often are background checks required for employees and volunteers?

Background checks for Priests, Deacons, and Seminarians are performed every **three years** through the Office of Safe Environment at the Chancery in Wheeling.

Background checks for Catholic school principals, Catholic school teachers, and directors of religious education are performed every **three years** by the local level Safe Environment coordinator at the school/parish.

Background checks for all other employees and volunteers not mentioned above are performed every **five years** by the local level Safe Environment coordinator at the school/parish.



How do parishes and schools determine who needs to be in compliance with Safe Environment?

There are three components that result in an employee or volunteer being compliant with the Safe Environment protocol in our Diocese:

1. Background Check
2. Completion of Awareness Training (VIRTUS is our awareness training provider)
3. Receipt of the Sex Abuse Policy and completion of the corresponding form



Once all three of these measures are accomplished, a person is in compliance with Safe Environment.

When you are trying to determine if Safe Environment applies, the protocol is to do so by parameters as opposed to specific employee or volunteer position titles. The Diocese uses a set of parameters as opposed to specific positions because not all of our parishes have children – especially the smaller and very rural churches. So when you are trying to determine if Safe Environment compliance applies, ask yourself:

1. Is the person in question an employee or volunteer?

If the answer to Question 1 is NO, then Safe Environment does not apply. You must be an employee or volunteer at a Diocesan or Diocesan-related entity for Safe Environment protocol to apply.

If the answer to Question 1 is YES, then ask yourself:

2. Is the person in contact – directly or indirectly – with children?

If the answer to Question 2 is NO, the person **never** comes into contact with children, directly or indirectly, then Safe Environment does not apply. But here's the kicker: you have to be 100 percent certain that the prospective employee or volunteer will **never** come into contact with children. Otherwise, Safe Environment applies.

If the answer to Question 2 is YES, the person comes into contact with children either directly or indirectly as part of his or her employment or volunteer duties, then the Safe Environment protocol applies, regardless of the specific title the person has at the parish or school, and completion of a background check, awareness training (VIRTUS), and Sex Abuse Policy form are required.

***Please note:** If you have special guests, speakers, or circumstances at the parish or school and are unsure whether Safe Environment applies, please call the Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504 to discuss. We can help you determine if Safe Environment protocol is applicable to any circumstance that may arise.

Adults: Let's Model Good Behavior Every Day

By Paul Ashton, Psy.D., D.Min.



Let us all remember this: one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one's life.—Pope Francis

Our work together to protect children is ongoing and never ending. That is what Love is all about. It is the message of the Gospels and the clear and certain teaching of Jesus: "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19: 14).

For adults, living out the message of Christianity is a way of life. It is not only words, but also actions. It permeates the presence of each person so that what remains after an encounter is reminiscent of the "odor of sanctity," said to have been emitted from the Saints who led lives of

extraordinary holiness. For example, after an encounter with another person, our presence, good deeds and kindness leave a pleasant odor behind, and the people we speak to are left feeling good about themselves and their life. When we act in this way, we become "manna personalities" defined as "divinely supplied spiritual nourishment." We feed others through nourishing them with our good words, actions and deeds.

It is a good way to look at how we live—do you leave behind a good odor? Do we feed the people we encounter? Even when we have a difficult duty or obligation to perform, there is always a kinder way to do so. With just a little reflection and thought, we can change the way we affect others. The old song from the 1960's comes to mind: "They'll Know We are Christians" by our Love (written by Fr. Peter Scholtes and inspired by John 13:35). Being a witness for our Faith in many ways makes us first responders to the situations we encounter along the way. Protecting children is one of those ways in which we all take part. While we may not always think of the ways in which this happens, the small things that we do make a big difference. Consider the following times you may be protecting children each and every day:

-Following rules, without trying to break them or go around them in places where children and minors gather. This sets a good example and goes a long way in offering kids safe spaces.

-Watching and being alert to the behaviors of other adults when there are gatherings of children, serves to protect youth.

-Listening to the children in your life, attending to the details, being interested in their stories—this form of paying attention gives them confidence in the way they communicate with you.

-Talking to kids about safety rules, modeling good behaviors: putting your seat belt on, respecting the environment, being safe when crossing streets—all lead to good practices for kids to follow.

-Helping children who appear lost and getting them to a safe person in charge, and waiting with them until their parents come forward (lost children in stores, etc.).

-Having another adult present with you when you are in a position of trust with kids.

-Being the other safe adult for someone who is ministering to children.

-Making sure you don't curse or act inappropriately in the presence of children and within their earshot.

-Speaking positively about the efforts and programs the Church and other groups are undertaking to protect children.

-Supporting child protection efforts by participating and volunteering.

-Educating children, teaching them and being positive in the way you help them.



-Helping parents when they have their arms full of their children, baby carriages and other things.

-Smiling, nodding with understanding and a kind look when a parent is in a tough situation with their kids and trying to manage.

-Reporting any suspicions of inappropriate behaviors of people you know or don't know to the appropriate leadership, and even the authorities.

-Being present, not ignoring others in need.

-Coaching kid's sports.

-Donating money to agencies that support children and families.

-Praying for the safety of all children and vulnerable persons.

-Being involved in family activities where you can show your leadership.

-Acting on the adage, "if you see something, say something."

-Being trained in safe environment programs, first aid classes, emergency drill protocols, etc.



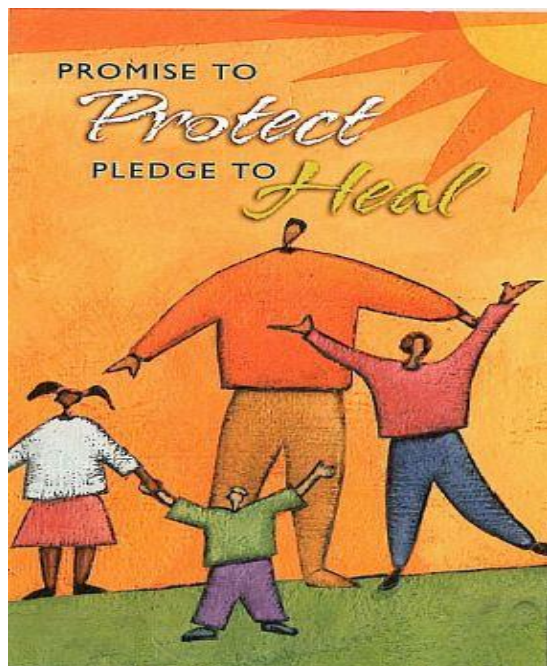
Proclaiming the Gospels isn't left only to those ordained to the priesthood and diaconate. Each person who hears God's word and takes it into their heart and acts on it, does this effectively and boldly no matter how small the gesture may seem. We contribute to the good of the world and the safety of those entrusted to us by being fully alive and present to God working within us. You don't have to be certified in anything to do this.

It is the time of year when schools are coming back into session and children face new experiences and environments. Why not lend a little support by being aware of how we, as individuals and collectively, can make their world happier, safer and brighter?

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Why Is There An Office Of Safe Environment?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) requires that all Dioceses/Eparchies have in place a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. The ***“Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”*** was adopted by the USCCB in June 2002 as a response to sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons, particularly from the time period of 1950 to 2002. The USCCB established an **Office of Child and Youth Protection** to oversee the application of the Charter's principles and to create the means for accountability for ensuring implementation of standards.



Reporting

To report suspected cases of sexual abuse please contact **your local law enforcement agency** or call the **West Virginia Adult / Child Abuse Hotline: 1.800.352.6513**

To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact one of the Bishop's designees at: **304.233.0880 or 1.888.434.6237:**

- Sr. Ellen F. Dunn, O.P., ext. 264
- Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263
- Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353
- Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, ext. 270

Or, please call:

- The Office of Safe Environment: 304.230.1504

You may also fill out and return a confidential **Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor** by printing one from the Diocese's web site at www.dwc.org, then clicking Diocese › Offices ›

Office of Safe Environment › Download Files and Forms or by calling 304.230.1504 to request a form via U.S. mail from the Office of Safe Environment.

The Three Components of Compliance

The Safe Environment Program by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston consists of the following three components:

- ✓ Background Check
- ✓ Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children
- ✓ Awareness training for adults (VIRTUS online or live training)

All three components are mandated by the Diocese for persons seeking employment or seeking to volunteer directly or indirectly with children. A person is considered in compliance with the Diocese's Safe Environment Policy upon successful completion of all three components. Every year, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston - as well as all other dioceses in the United States - is audited by the USCCB for compliance with its *“Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.”* The Diocese also convenes a lay-led Review Board that meets regularly to review all

Safe Environment matters and ensure adherence to the Safe Environment process, including reporting to civil authorities.

Teaching Safety

A Student Awareness Program has been implemented since the fall of 2005 to give children information (appropriate for their age levels) and skills to help recognize acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and how to effectively deal with those behaviors. This is a VIRTUS program called “**Teaching Safety**” (the program used to be called “Touching Safety” but was updated this past year). The program is taught in Catholic schools and as part of Parish Schools of Religion. This program offers lesson plans for children in grades Kindergarten through 12.

The “Teaching Safety” lesson cycle for this year is:

School Year **2019-20** ... **CYCLE THREE** ... **Lesson Five** (by the end of October) and **Lesson Six** (by the end of the school year). If both lessons are taught together, they should be taught by the end of October.

