



Illuminations

MAY - JUNE 2010

Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta • OCYP Newsletter

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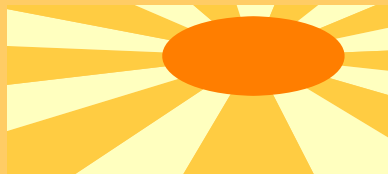
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24 Hour Reporting Hotline

888-437-0764

If reporting during regular business hours, call us directly first. If you cannot reach us in person, call the hotline.

Office of Child & Youth Protection
680 West Peachtree St. NW
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First Edition!

Welcome to the first edition of Illuminations - the Office of Child and Youth Protection (OCYP) bi-quarterly newsletter! Every two months, you will receive a new edition via the Pastoral Communique and you can find the most current and back copies via the OCYP webpage.

The newsletter will be two pages featuring an article written by Victim Assistance and Safe Environment Coordinators from dioceses around the country. These articles are the result of a request made by the Secretariat of the OCYP at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to aid in promoting what the Church is doing to create safety for children from abuse and reaching out to victims of abuse for healing.

The newsletter will also highlight upcoming issues and or events related to the interplay between the OCYP and your offices and ministries. We hope this newsletter will help us to keep the lines of communication flowing and be a resource to help you in your work with the people of the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Please let us know what you think by e-mailing us at ocyp@archatl.com!

Safe Environment

Children/Youth YOU MATTER Training



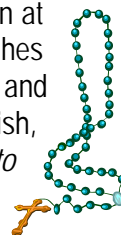
As you wrap up the school year, keep in mind to complete the Children/Youth tracking form and submit it to the Office of Safe Environment via fax 404-978-2778, or e-mail at jbroel@archatl.com, or the Archdiocese office via US mail by the end of the school year. All forms **MUST** be signed by your Pastor/Principal. For all of you that have already submitted the form THANK YOU!!!

Also, please remember to order "You Matter" materials by completing our online form at <http://www.archatl.com/offices/cyp/order/index.php>

Victim Assistance

"Cry to Heaven" on Behalf of the Abused

For the fourth consecutive year, guests at the Eucharistic Congress June 4-5, 2010 will have the opportunity to raise their prayers in a cry to heaven on behalf of the abused. These prayers are extended in hope for healing and comfort for victims and survivors of any and all abuse. This prayer effort began at the 2007 Eucharistic Congress and continues weekly in many parishes in the Archdiocese of Atlanta, surrounding our wounded brothers and sisters in Christ with prayer. If there is a "Cry to Heaven" prayer-time in your parish, consider joining them or designate a time in your personal prayer to "Cry to Heaven" on behalf of the abused.



Feature Article

From Safe Environments to Faith Environments: Furthering the Gospel Message of Christ

Elizabeth Heidt, Ph.D. ♦ Director, Child Protection Office ♦ Diocese of Grand Island, NE

In his last formal address to the Victim Assistance Ministry Conference as chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee for Protection of Children and Youth, Archbishop Gregory Aymond of New Orleans called for a paradigm shift – “from Safe Environments to Faith Environments.” A key point of his address was clear: Our efforts to right the wrong of sexual abuse and to protect the life and dignity of our children are not just about safety, but about our faith. All that we do as Church to respond to those suffering the pain of abuse, to protect children and youth, and to promote right relationships models the Gospel message of Christ.

Not our Compliance, but our Calling

Often when we hear about the efforts of the Church in regard to sexual abuse, we hear about the importance of compliance with the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. From a faith environment perspective, the importance is not in our compliance, but in our calling. As Catholics we are called to respect the life and dignity of every human person from conception to natural death. The *Charter* guides us in action to our calling. Our calling furthers the Gospel message of Christ.

Not Retribution, but Reverence

When we are bogged down with the requirements of a safe environment program or when we linger on the costs of healing and prevention efforts, we may be tempted to say, “That’s not my problem, I didn’t cause the abuse.” From a faith perspective however, this is a matter of looking out for the need of others – their healing, safety, support and respect. As Christ said, “Whatever you do for the least of my brothers you do for me.”

Not Managing Risk, but Modeling Right Relationships

Safe environment programs are more than “risk management,” focusing on the actions to reduce the risk of abuse, to reduce further damage to our children and our Church. They involve modeling Christ, creating for children the kind of loving relationships that Christ teaches about in His gospel message. Every protective message to children, from noting their unique and special creation, their dignity as a person, and true meaning of love in relationships furthers the Gospel message of Christ.

Not merely Programs, Policies, and Procedures, but Who and How We Are

As we move from the concept of safe environments to that of faith environments we realize that our efforts are more than a program with requirements to be checked off on a list. Healing those who have been harmed, preventing abuse, and modeling right relationships must be an inherent part of *who and how we are with children*.

Matthew 18: 4-5 NAB, “And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

Our efforts to right the wrong of sexual abuse and to protect the life and dignity of our children are not just about safety, but about our faith.