

As previously announced, beginning in the Fall of 2022 and continuing throughout the 2022-2023 catechetical Year, all children who participate in parish Religious Education programs will be offered a series of age-appropriate lessons on preventing child sexual abuse by educating children regarding boundaries, safe and unsafe behaviors and healthy relationships. This program from Virtus, is an age-appropriate tool which educates children on what to do if someone violates their personal boundaries.

Empowering God's Children

Parent Led Option

Karen Clark, Director, Department for the
Protection of the Faithful



Archdiocese of Newark

Department for the Protection of the Faithful

July 1, 2022

To: Pastors, Parish Administrators, Parish Local Safe Environment Coordinators, Parish Catechetical Leaders;

As previously announced, beginning in the Fall of 2022 and continuing throughout the 2022-2023 catechetical Year, all children who participate in parish Religious Education programs will be offered a series of age-appropriate lessons on preventing child sexual abuse by educating children regarding boundaries, safe and unsafe behaviors and healthy relationships. This program from Virtus, is an age-appropriate tool which educates children on what to do if someone violates their personal boundaries.

I have attached an information sheet regarding these sessions. This fall, we will be doing Lessons 3 and 4. Each lesson, which includes a video and discussion, is approximately 40 minutes long.

The program is available in multiple ways:

1. Parents are welcome to conduct these sessions in their own homes. Have parents notify you if this is their chosen option. If parents want online guidance in how to have these discussions with their child(ren), there is an online module available through Virtus. If they want this module or wish to read the Parent Guide for Teaching Empowering God's Children, we can assign the former, and they can access the latter on the Protection of the Faithful website. The Local Safe Environment Coordinator or Parish Catechetical Leader would then email the parent the lesson plans. Both the lessons and the videos come in different age-appropriate versions. Upon completion of the lessons, the parent will return a form which indicates that they have successfully completed the training with their child(ren).
2. The lessons will be presented by one or more catechists who are approved by the Parish Catechetical Leader. These catechists will be provided training in how to have these discussions with the children.
3. Parishes can group together and engage a Virtus facilitator to train the children

Parents may also choose to completely Opt-Out of this training by submitting a form to the parish.

Parishes can feel free to put this information on their own letterhead, to send to families. Contact sect@rcan.org for a revisable copy.

I will be available to you for questions. Soon, we will be providing specific communication that you can provide to your parents, but feel free to distribute the attached, or any of the resources on the Protection of the Faithful portion of the Archdiocesan website, www.rcan.org

Sincerely,

Karen G. Clark

Director, Department for the Protection of the Faithful

Archdiocesan Pastoral Center
171 Clifton Avenue – Newark, NJ 07104
P: (973) 497-4254 F: (973) 497-4001



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TO OPT-OUT THE CHILD FROM THE SAFETY LESSONS, RETURN THIS PORTION TO:

Your child's catechist, by Sunday, October 16, 2022

I, *(printed name of parent or guardian)* _____, have reviewed the material provided and DO NOT wish to present the *Empowering God's Children* Safety Lessons to my child.

(Printed name of child) _____ Grade _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

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October 2, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In an effort to assist in the monumental mission of protecting children, St. Teresa's of Calcutta, Montclair, is partnering with you to present a safe environment lesson to your child. It is our cherished role as adults to fully protect children. In addition, we must also teach children/youth about their safety rights and boundaries, so that they have tools to protect themselves. What follows is information about the program itself and the resources available to you. **PLEASE NOTE: There are required action items on page 2 with content you may need to return.**

Empowering God's Children Program Information:

A program for children, each lesson includes a grade-appropriate video component along with learning activities. The material is designed to better equip your child to know their safety rights, recognize their boundaries, and to empower them to protect themselves when safe adults are not immediately available—and ultimately be safer from people who might want to harm them.

As you prepare to deliver this content to youth, there are two especially helpful resources to assist in delivering the lessons. First, the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide*, which equips safe adults to facilitate an ongoing safety dialogue, and the *Lesson Leader Orientation and Certification Module*, give you better insight about conducting the lessons. Please communicate directly with your local safe environment coordinator to gain access to each of these specific resources. Following the lesson, we encourage you to continue reinforcing the message at home whenever possible.

- I. **TRAINING FORMAT:** We will be providing the lesson plan to you as the parent/guardian to present the information directly to your own child/youth. Your Parish Catechetical Leader will share the lessons with you and any additional instructions on sharing this information the child/youth in your care.
- II. **CONTACT INFORMATION:** For questions, or to obtain access to the resources, the specific lesson and related activities, please contact:
Mary Peters, Family Faith Coordinator, FamilyFaith@montclaircatholics.org

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PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Complete this portion AFTER you have provided the Empowering God's Children Program Lessons to your child/youth

I, (name of parent/guardian) _____, certify that I have presented my child/youth (name) _____ in grade _____, the *Empowering God's Children Lesson 3: Boundaries: You Have Rights! And Lesson 4: Secrets, Surprises and Promises* on (date) _____.

Parent Signature* _____ Date _____

**If you are unable to print, sign and scan, typing in your full name above will be considered your signature.*

RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO

Mary Peters, Family Faith Coordinator
FamilyFaith@montclaircatholics.org

BY: Sunday, October 16, 2022

Thank you for your partnership with us to protect children and youth.

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