

Newsletter

SAFEGUARDING ALL OF GOD'S FAMILY

THIS ISSUE

- Human Dignity and Safe Environments



Greetings from the Safe Environment Office,

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is committed to keeping children safe every day throughout the year. This month, known throughout the United States as National Child Abuse Prevention Month, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee focuses on human dignity as we begin Safe Environment Week, April 15 – 21. The theme of human dignity a natural fit for the Catholic Church, as we believe that it is the foundation of all moral values in society, and therefore, at the core of all safe environments.

All of us are part of God's family, and so we must be recognized and treated with dignity and respect, especially those who are most vulnerable. Children and young people have feelings and emotions, hopes and dreams; the same as every person. By virtue of being human, we all have the same worth and value. The creation of safe environments, especially for our children and young people, are meant to enhance and protect their dignity. Every child should be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity that should be respected, nurtured and protected by all.

I have asked Lydia LoCoco, Director of the *Nazareth Project* for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, to offer her insights on the respect for life and human dignity themes. The Nazareth Project for Marriage and Family Formation is an office of The John Paul II Center for Lifelong Faith and Ministry Formation. One of the many areas the Nazareth Projects supports is that of the Church's teachings on Respect Life.

God Bless,

Patti Loehrer
Safe Environment Coordinator
Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you, Patti, for this opportunity. The key word in the title of our office is "formation", and part of the new evangelization is to articulate and evangelize the Truth found in the person of Jesus Christ, a truth which is made manifest in His body, the Church. So it is right that we "begin at the beginning" during this week and month that is especially devoted to the safety of children, but more importantly to the core teaching of the dignity of the human person. Keeping children safe is not merely the task of one archdiocesan office, but rather the call of each believer to see Christ in every person and to defend the dignity of all human life, not matter what stage, from conception until natural death. The dignity of the human person is not a concept "made up" by the Church, but rather rooted in the person as created in the image and likeness of God. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1700) This divine image is present in every man, woman, and child. In each human being that we encounter, we see the face of the Divine.

It was John Paul II who continued the teaching of the Church in the area of human dignity, by more fully elucidating the fundamental and foundational nature of the dignity of the person. He saw, and tirelessly taught, that this dignity was the cornerstone for all issues related to social justice and peace. He had seen first hand under totalitarian regimes, just how fragile were the societal protections regarding this dignity, and was an outspoken advocate for the weakest and most innocent in our society. In *Evangelium Vitae* no. 93, he writes:

A society lacks solid foundations when, on the one hand, it asserts values such as the dignity of the person, justice and peace, but then, on the other hand, radically acts to the contrary by allowing or tolerating a variety of ways in which human life is devalued and violated, especially where it is weak or marginalized.

The Catholic Church has become a lone voice in the wilderness of secular society, preaching the doctrine of the dignity of the human person as a “normative doctrine”, as Cardinal Dolan has called it recently; as normative as the Trinity, the Incarnation, Redemption and the Eucharist. Not only is this truth preached, but it is the cornerstone of all Church teaching, and it is implemented down to the most specific of details in Church-run institutions, parishes, schools, and offices. The goal of the Bishops of the United States is to seek to affirm the intrinsic value of all human life and the dignity of every human being in a way that transforms the culture. They seek to do this by “developing effective communication strategies, looking more deeply into the assumptions and cultural challenges that work for or against the acceptance of the intrinsic value and dignity of human life.” The Bishops also seek “to provide a comprehensive framework for teaching and defending the life and dignity of every human being, to use the life and dignity of the human person as the underlying framework all of the various committees and task forces that continue the ongoing educational and advocacy efforts in the areas of life, justice, and peace, and lastly to mobilize the entire Catholic community to prevent the erosion of any existing public policies protecting the unborn and rights of conscience.”

(see <http://usccb.org/about/priority-plan.cfm>)

A copy of this Newsletter can be found on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee website www.archmil.org under Resources.

I am thankful to the Bishops of the United States for their leadership, and I am especially grateful for the local leadership of Archbishop Listecki together with Milwaukee's Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office for its commitment to implementing their goals. Together, we will continually pledge to commit ourselves to building a safe environment for all people, where the dignity of every person is respect, venerated and protected.

Lydia LoCoco

Director
The Nazareth Project for Marriage

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION BLESSING

Dear Lord,

We ask You to bless these Your holy people who have participated in the Church's efforts to help stop child sexual abuse.

Open their hearts to Your call to be the “ears, eyes and voice of children and young people” everywhere.

Give them the vision and grace needed to fulfill the special commitments that each of them has made to making their homes, churches, schools, communities and world a safer place for all God's Children.

Amen



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