



St. Francis Youth Ministry Parent Packet Resources from the Virtus Safe Touches Program

The following information is a summary of the subjects and topics that must be discussed with our youth. The diocese has asked all of the parishes to put this program into effect so as to ensure a safe environment across the board. Please feel free to use this as a helpful resource to help guide our youth to make safe/ wise decisions in mind, body, and soul. This information **IS NOT** to be given to the youth to read. It is to be read first by the parent and the parent should lead discussions on the following topics in ways they feel most relevant.

I. Introduction

Reports of crime are on the news everyday. Here are a few statistics that will emphasize the point that our youth need to be given the tools to live out healthy and happy lives. Out of the leading causes for death amongst younger teens (10-14) three of the top 5 include accidents, suicide, and homicide. Out of the leading causes for death amongst older teens (15-19) the top three are accidents, homicide, and suicide. Child abuse is not something to be taken lightly. Statistics reveal that 1 out of every 4 girls and 1 out of every 6 boys will be victims of abuse before they are 18 years old. The *Virtus* program is one of the ways that the Catholic Church and our Diocese is using to help prevent such atrocities and reach out to those in need of care. Bishop Kevin Farrell requested (or rather mandated) that every parent and child within his diocese be educated through the *Protecting God's Children* program. We hope that the information we share with you and your youth today will arm them with the tools to prevent abuse. Working together we can minimize the risk of all child abuse.

II. Opening Prayer

“ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
so that those who love your name may
exult in you.
For you bless the righteous, O Lord;
You cover them with favor as with a shield.”

Psalm 5:11-12

III. Safety Discussion

Ask your youth to identify qualities that make them feel safe. Ask them to identify characteristics of a “safe person” (i.e. they are honest, kind and gentle with others. They do not overstep their boundaries. They take care of themselves. They drive

safely etc...). Next ask them about what characteristics do we consider threatening or unsafe (i.e. hit others, yell at others, don't take care of themselves, they are very secretive and they lie, are manipulative etc...). Even use celebrity examples of either "safe" or "unsafe" adults.

IV. Discussion

- +Are things always what they appear/seem to be?
- +What are some ways we can identify the intentions of a person?
- +How can we trust that a person is safe?
- +What are some ways that you help create a safe environment for yourself? We will first start by identifying some threats that we might encounter in our lives.

Make a list of possible Threats or Dangers:

Example: (depending of age level you pick what's appropriate or have them identify somethings that are unsafe for their well being...)

***reports of the following can be found as young as 5th grade or even younger so please cover the following topics.

→peer pressure, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, manipulation, gangs, stealing, violence, weapons, bullying, peers driving, alcohol, drugs, rape, kidnapping, suicide, depression, **cyber stalking/ bullying**, kidnapping, murder, car accidents, anorexia, bulimia, etc...

Now make a list of the places where you might encounter these dangers:

(the reality is most of these can happen anywhere)
(school, mall, at a friends house, church group, home, etc...)

Now for each danger discuss ways to avoid this threat all together, or to protect yourself from these things

Next discuss the parent should go through with each one of these dangers and talk about different ways to protect yourself if you were caught in a situation and how you could best get out. (1) be careful who you trust 2) be aware of places you can go for times of trouble aka call your parents older siblings teachers etc... 3) know what real love is... real love is willing the good of another... if someone is hurting you tell them they are hurting you. If they do not seek to change you must go to someone else to get help for you and that person.)

Example: for bullying, what should you do if you see someone getting bullied/ pushed into a locker or being attacked?

+(depending on the situation: go get help from a teacher or safe adult, talk to the bully and try to calm them down, etc..., is someone is bullying you walk away, get help from a teacher or trusted adult, have you friends stand up with you, do your best to avoid the bully.)

What can we do?

This is a two way street not only do we need to be on guard to look for what is safe and what is unsafe. We also need to evaluate our own actions and see if we are truly treating others with the same love that Christ would. If we are abrasive in our words or actions towards others whether is be at home, in school, in sports or in general we need to identify what triggers us to do so as well as making efforts to change and treat others with respect and dignity.

Now return to your very first list and add to your safe and unsafe list. Remind your youth that they are NEVER ALONE! Remind them that God is always there for them and that you will do your best to keep them safe as well. Make sure that they are able to articulate people that they should go to in a time where they might need help (you, siblings, other safe adults, youth minister, priest, teachers, mentors etc...)

Make sure to cover dating/ relationships as well so that when they are ready to finish school and go out into the real world, they know what a healthy relationship looks like! (In a good marriage the husband and wife are seeking the good of the other... they are not just based on good looks and feelings or money but rather will this relationship with this person help draw me closer to God and my purpose as his child?). –This topic will be covered in High School specifically for guys only on March 29th and for girls only

The three R's:

- 1) **Refuse**- Say words that mean NO!
 - 2) **Resist**- Run away from that person! GO!
 - 3) **Report**- Tell a trusted adult. It is never too late to tell someone about unsafe touches, no matter how long the touching has been going on. It is never right to keep unsafe secrets. It is okay to break a promise and tell about an unsafe touch. The people you can tell are adults that you trust. It can be your mom or dad your grandparents, your catechist, teacher...or anyone you trust. (remember the list of adults you have discussed with your parents). TELL!
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Close in prayer as a family.

PARENT RESOURCES:

Now that we've identified some key dangers and ways to deal with them here are some websites for parents to use for specific topics:

To report child abuse or neglect:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_Us/report_abuse.asp or

call 1-800-252-5400 Call Abuse Hotline toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide. (If life threatening call local law enforcement or 911).

Bullying: <http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/bullying.asp>

Teen site:

<http://www.pacerteensagainstbullying.org/?gclid=CKqjnYLTzaQCFVkJ2godcn68Bw>

Cyber bullying: <http://www.wiredsafety.org/wiredlearning/Cyberbullying/index.htm>

In case of abuse (sexual, physical, emotional, substance etc), depression, eating disorders, etc Saint Francis Parish does provide a list of available counselors as well as several contacts for proper help from authorities.

Please contact either Tammy Weber (the Director of Youth Ministry) x358 or Ginny Milich (the Safe Environment Coordinator) x228 (church number is (972) 712-2645 X358).