



Office of the Bishop

August 1, 2008

My Dear Brother Clergy, Brothers and Sisters in Consecrated Life, and the Lay Faithful:

I present the attached materials for the 2008-09 Safe Environment Program for the Diocese of Tyler. I ask each program that serves minors or vulnerable adults in the Diocese of Tyler to actively promote participation in the Safe Environment Program. I also ask every parent/guardian to prayerfully respond to the opportunities provided to help form their children in a safe and holy manner.

In our day and age, it is essential that children be well-formed in respecting their own sacred dignity, as well as the sacred dignity of each person they meet. Indeed, it is necessary that adults, too, be reminded of the need to respect the sacred dignity of every person, particularly of those that are vulnerable and need protection. As a Church, we must model that respect, and we must do all we can to protect all of God's children. As a Church, we must offer help to parents/guardians in the formation of their children. Children and young people need to be formed to understand the importance of appropriate boundaries in their lives and in their relationships with other people.

Too often I have seen the pain created in people's lives when these boundaries are not respected. This abuse is generally not the result of a random attack, but rather follows a systematic grooming cycle, where natural and social boundaries are crossed, one by one. Sexual abuse is more about power and control than it is about sex. The effect of abuse of one person causes pain to the victim, their family, their true friends, and even their community. Observing boundaries and stopping these grooming behaviors are keys to creating a safer environment.

I ask every parent to study these materials. By God's design, you are the primary teachers of your children. Every effort has been made to ensure the materials will be meaningful, but not objectionable. Some of the materials will be of help to your understanding, and some would be shared with your children. I encourage you to allow your children the opportunity to have these materials presented in an age-appropriate way in your parish program.

The materials are broken into three groups: Informational materials for the adults; materials for use with minors during the Fall Safe Environment Week (September 27-Oct 2, 2008), which will focus on the prayer as part of the response to the evil of abuse; and materials for use with minors in the January Safe Environment Week (January 17-23, 2009) on behavior of adults, specifically church personnel, and preventing grooming.

Again this year, I am encouraging all parishes to be actively involved in the local observance of April as Child Abuse Awareness Month.

I thank you for your efforts to create a safer environment in East Texas. May God use these efforts in building His Kingdom.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Most Rev. Alvaro Corrada, SJ
Bishop of Tyler

Most Reverend Alvaro Corrada, S.J., Bishop of Tyler
1015 ESE Loop 323 ♦ Tyler, Texas 75701 ♦ (903) 534-1077 ♦ Fax (903) 939-1037