**For the Home – Safe Environment Program, Grades Pre-K and Kindergarten**

**Theme: Keeping Myself Safe**

[Place on Parish/School Letterhead] [Date]

***Re: Safe Environment Program, Grades Pre-K and Kindergarten***

***Theme: Keeping Myself Safe***

Dear Parents of Pre-K and Kindergarten students,

For many years, the Diocese has been offering instruction in safe environment and chastity to its students in grades 1 – 12. In the Spring of 2013, Governor Pat Quinn signed Erin’s Law, requiring that schools provide children in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten with “age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education.” Therefore, we have developed a very simplified lesson plan for pre-kindergarteners and kindergarteners which will be taught beginning in the 2013-2014

school year.

We recognize that, as parents, you are the first teachers of faith, prayers, and a life of love with Jesus, as well as God’s gift of human sexuality and to remain chaste. Our program for pre-k and kindergarten children is intended to assist parents in the formation of their children in the virtue of chastity.

Why Chastity?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) introduces the discussion of chastity by calling it a vocation (See CCC2337ff.). As children grow older, they learn that chastity is the virtue which gives the grace to use sexual activity in accord with their state of life. This virtue begins to be developed when a child learns that his or her body is sacred.

How will the program work?

The basic theme of the Pre-K and Kindergarten program is Personal Safety. It starts with this simple concept that is often avoided because of lack of comfort and knowledge of how to introduce this topic to a four- or five-year old child. Given the helpful tools, teachers and parents can begin the discussion to protect the sanctity of life by understanding the sacredness of one’s body. We are using the story book, The Birthday Suit, by Kristina and Ashlin Muldoon, and illustrated by Claire Shatzen, to

introduce children to personal safety.

In Pre-K and Kindergarten classes, The Birthday Suit story book will be read to the children by the classroom teacher. The book explains that God made everyone a birthday suit with a few parts for only the child, parents and a select few people (i.e. doctor) to see. It teaches modesty and how to stop

anyone who tries to mishandle the child’s birthday suit. The book is 19 pages and offers optional discussion questions to use with older primary students. The book is the entire program for Pre-K and Kindergarten children. Although the lesson will be short, as appropriate for this age group, it will be presented in both pre-K and Kindergarten classes, to reinforce to the children that they can say no at an early age. These concepts of saying “no” to anyone who touches him or her in a way that is not appropriate can be reinforced at home, and we encourage parents to obtain a copy of the book to read to your child and discuss at home.

What can parents teach their Pre-kindergartener or Kindergartener?

Parents can teach their child that God gave each child a gift of a birthday suit (the child’s body) that was made just for the child, and it should be kept chaste. The gift of a child’s body should always be protected and cherished. With instruction and reinforcement, and support and affirmation from their parents and teachers, children can learn to take responsibility for their safety. The Birthday Suit is

an excellent starting point to introduce our children to the skills they need to be safe.

The Diocese’s program recognizes that parents know their children’s development and maturity level, and can best judge when their child is ready for specific lessons or information. Thus, if you wish your child to be opted out from this lesson in pre-K and or in kindergarten, you may do so by completing the opt out form which the school will be sending home to you this Fall before the book is scheduled to be read in class.

Sincerely yours in Christ, [Pastor/Principal/DRE]