



Diocese of Rockford

555 Colman Center Drive
P.O. Box 7044
Rockford, Illinois 61125

(815) 399-4300
Fax (815) 399-4769

Office of the Bishop

June 19, 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002, requires parishes and schools to provide formation for children in the areas of safety and dignity of their persons. To assist our families with this important task, we are updating our resources as part of our ongoing commitment to maintain safe environments for children and to protect all children from sexual abuse. To meet this challenge of ensuring safety in our schools and religious education programs, we are pleased to announce that the Diocesan Catholic Education Office has updated the kindergarten through eighth grade training programs for child protection in the diocese and is now implementing the *Teaching Safety—Empowering God’s Children Program* through Virtus. The pre-kindergarten program remains the same with an age appropriate lesson plan which introduces the basic theme of personal safety. As you know, Virtus has been part of our adult child protection training for more than 15 years now.

The *Teaching Safety—Empowering God’s Children Program* provides the required training for all grade levels with specific themes which build on basic concepts of safety, boundaries and awareness throughout the program.

Students will be trained annually by grade levels with lesson plans that are clear, concise and easy to implement because they are designed for each specific grade level with each lesson plan explaining the basic principles and objectives with references to *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and background information. These lessons are taught at an age appropriate level and repeat over a three year cycle. As in the past, an opt-out option will be made available should parents choose not to have their children participate in the classroom training.

An in-depth overview booklet will be provided to parents giving them the tools necessary to continue effective conversations with their children at home. These conversations along with classroom training are designed to achieve our combined goal of keeping children safe from those that might seek to harm them.

This updated program allows for completed training reports to be filed quickly and conveniently online so as to maintain full compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

Trainings for these programs have been underway and the program is to be fully implemented in schools and parishes in the Fall of 2019.

The *Teaching Safety—Empowering God’s Children Program* replaces previous programs promulgated by the Diocesan Catholic Education Office, and is mandatory for all Catholic primary schools and parish religious education programs in the Diocese of Rockford.

I ask the blessing of our Lord on all of our children and on those entrusted with their care on behalf of the Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford