

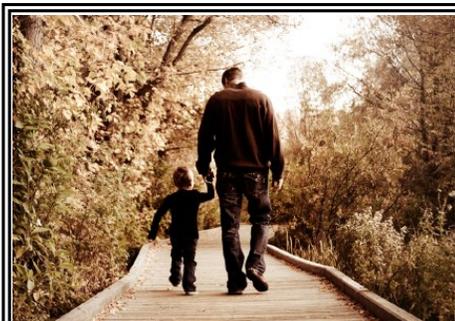
# Diocese of Rapid City

## Keeping God's Children Safe

### A Safe Environment Newsletter

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The Church refers to each of our individual family homes as the "domestic church" where our children first learn about our faith everyday. As parents, we are then the primary educators of our children teaching them our faith. Some interpret this as children learning about the teachings of our faith and scripture stories as they gather around us. Prayer is learned at mealtimes, gathered together to recite the rosary, and our daily prayers to God. We need to remember it goes well past that, as Blessed Pope Paul VI stated in **LUMEN GENTIUM** (Section 11), "The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state." Our children learn about our faith by our own words and our actions that they hear, see, and experience firsthand within our home. It is all of this together, from each of our homes, that we bring to collectively create our parish family, our faith community, as our parish.



I don't want my children to be what I want them to be. I want them to become everything God created them to be. -Jon Gordon

<http://www.jongordon.com/>

It is here, in the bridge and support of family home and parish family that we need to talk about the use of alcohol. In our safe environment lessons presented to adults and youth we look at areas, events, and persons, that may make our children and youth uncomfortable, and their gut, their inner voice, tells them, "I don't like this; I don't feel safe; I feel scared." We teach them to say, "No!," get away from the person, the situation, and go and tell a trusted adult. As parents, as trusted adults, we hope they come to us and tell us, so we can help them and protect them. There are other trusted adults they may have in their life that they could also go and ask for help; hopefully we would all be there to help them and keep in focus their need for safety. That is what safe environment is about – that every child is safe in any setting, and if they are ever uncomfortable, they know what to do and who to tell. We do not want them to be silent or keep secrets – but to speak and ask for help so they, and others like them, can be safe.

As leaders in the domestic church of our family, as adults in our faith family of our parish, you are asked to reflect and pray on the following scenarios. After each scenario consider: *As a member of evangelization, of welcoming with support, and living out your lively faith as a Catholic, what is your response? Do you stand silent, because this may be my friend, my neighbor, a relative – how can I speak up? Or do you take action to offer support, to protect, to find resources and solutions – because you want your children and our children to be safe? What do our children hear? What do our children see?*

#### SCENARIOS:

1. An adult enters the gathering area, and the adult's speech and actions makes another adult think "This person has been drinking." The adult comes to pick up his child/youth to drive home. What will you do? Do you take action for that night? Do you build a bridge to encourage the adult to go for recovery and support this adult through the recovery process?

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**USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection**  
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/index.cfm>

**Diocese of Rapid City Safe Environment**  
[www.rapidcitydiocese.org/WP/safe-environment home](http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org/WP/safe-environment-home)

*Taking a child he placed him in their midst, and putting his arms around him, he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."*

- Mark 9:36-37

2. No alcohol is present, consumed, or tolerated at events on the Church grounds/property as the standard. When the parish sponsors/supports events that are held elsewhere in the community, the question is asked, "What about alcohol?" At some of these events alcohol has been present. Why does the question arise? What action should be taken to resolve this for the good of the entire parish, including our children/youth? What leadership are we showing to our community? What is your response?

3. Some think it is easier to speak about whether alcohol is allowed at an event by asking if "*Adult Beverages*" are allowed. Does this raise a flag? Does it tell you one already knows what the answer should be, but may not want to make the right decision? A few questions to consider: Are minors present at this event? When everyone leaves, is anyone leaving intoxicated? Are they going anywhere they may encounter our youth? What is your response?

4. Members of our own community know of homes where heavy drinking goes on with children and youth present. This has serious consequences for children living in these homes. Two statistics of many:

- About 43% of U.S. adults — 76 million people — have been exposed to alcoholism in the family — they grew up with or married an alcoholic or a problem drinker or had a blood relative who was an alcoholic or problem drinker.
- An estimated 6.6 million children under 18 live in households with at least one alcoholic parent.

When you read more, you will see how this affects all of us; it is not just a family problem—it is our problem. Why do we want this for our youth? If we don't want this, then what actions are we called to take? Is our silence part of this problem?

Our diocese and faith communities bring us new ways to look at evangelization as we explore many ways to welcome individuals and people to our faith families in our parishes. We are continuing to welcome, and now expanding to explore what it means to evangelize with a lively faith, and what our faith calls us to be and do as Catholics. As one prays over these thoughts and actions, at some point, one faces the realization this ongoing evangelization is not only about extending out to welcome others coming through our doors at church, and going out and inviting family members and friends to come and experience a relationship with Jesus Christ. We realize this new evangelization also needs to occur within our own heart and soul. We have to pray and allow our relationship with our Lord to grow; continually transforming our very being, until we become the human being that God created each of us to be, "*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*" -Ps. 139:13-16. How do you use each day the Lord gives you with His plan for you?

In America, we so value the concept of independence; it has mistakenly lead us to believe we are independent and we can do everything by our self! We will shortly celebrate Independence Day – when thousands worked together and gave their very life that our country may be independent, and not be ruled by others. We need to learn from that loss of life and realize we are not independent individuals, nor can we do everything by our self. In prayer with our Lord, one is not independent; one knows we are each very dependent on our Lord, and ask for his loving mercy and graces to share with others.

Summertime brings a time of hot, long days, variety of activities, and changes in our schedules. Our children's daily school-structured schedule changes to a more varied and relaxed time as well. With this change, it is good for parents to take time to consider how to keep their children safe not only during the summer, but as they continue their young lives into early adulthood.

The children and youth in their Safe Environment lessons are asked not to be silent. We ask you to do the same. Please do not be silent; do not keep secrets that may truly hurt others, even our own children. We need to be the trusted adult having the child always in center focus. May God, through his grace, give us the strength to use our free will and act with lively faith to keep our children safe in our homes and beyond!

Resources:

[DSS of South Dakota– Behavior Health Treatment Services](#)  
[Addiction Recovery Guide—South Dakota Resources](#)  
[Drug-Rehabs.Org—Programs in or around SD Cities](#)

[National Association for Children of Alcoholics](#)  
[NAOCA—Children of Addicted Parents:](#)  
[Important Facts \(.pdf file\)](#)