



Bulletin Points from the Office of Safe Environment:

1. *See that you do not despise one of these little ones,* for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father. Matthew 18:10*

Did you know...

April is both Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Child abuse can occur in every culture, religion, and socio-economic demographic. The vast majority of child abuse occurs at the hands of someone known to the child victim. Those who seek to do harm to children will pursue opportunities that provide access to children and may appear to be helpful and friendly. Our Diocesan policy of the **Essential Three** requires that all who minister work, or volunteer in the Diocese complete background screening, training and agree to a code of conduct. This is one of the ways we endeavor to educate our parish and school communities and create a culture of child protection.

2. Did you know....

Research estimates 1 in 6 children will experience online sexual abuse before the age of 18 (Crimes Against Children Research Center 2022). As parents and caregivers, we must remain vigilant and involved in our children's online worlds. Want to know more? Visit <https://protectyoungeyes.com/>

3. What is *Circle of Grace*?

One of the ways our parish creates a culture of protection is by teaching the *Circle of Grace* safe environment curriculum to all enrolled in Faith Formation and Youth Ministry programs and to the students in our Catholic Schools. In an age-appropriate manner, *Circle of Grace* teaches children and youth personal safety skills including recognizing physical, emotional and spiritual boundaries, identifying trusted adults, and taking action if boundary violations occur.

4. Did you know...

All members of the clergy, Directors of Religious Education and teachers in our schools are Mandated Reporters in Massachusetts and required by law to report any suspected child abuse. Many children will not tell anyone they are being abused. Because the Diocese believes in our moral obligation to protect children, we extend the safe environment training to all who minister, work or volunteer. Watch for signs of abuse and, if you are concerned about a child, share those concerns with a mandated reporter at your parish or school. Let us all be a voice for children who may not be able to speak for themselves.

5. In November 2024, Bishop da Cunha issued a report entitled *Fostering a Culture of Protection: An Update on Safe Environment Initiatives in the Diocese of Fall River*. To learn more about the many ways the diocese works to protect children, read the document here: <https://www.fallriverdiocese.org/app/uploads/2024/11/Fostering-a-Culture-of-Protection-final.pdf>
6. The Diocese of Fall River stands firm in its commitment to report abuse to law enforcement and cooperate with investigations. If you have been abused by someone representing the Church (priest, deacon, religious, employee or volunteer), we are sorry. We are here to listen and support you. Report an incident of abuse by contacting local law enforcement directly and by contacting Diocesan Director of Safe Environment and Victim Assistance, Carolyn Shipp at 508-985-6508 (confidential voice mail) or cshipp@dioc-fr.org. She can assist you in making a report and support you through the process.

Additionally, the Diocese has implemented an online reporting option: Awareity Incident Management System. Awareity is a comprehensive and confidential platform for reporting, tracking and documenting incidents and concerns. <https://www.fallriverdiocese.org/safe-environment/report-an-incident-of-abuse/>

Petitions

- For the children who are wounded and tearful, that they may find comfort and healing, we pray to the Lord.
- For those who are living in fear, that they may find safety, we pray to the Lord.
- For those who have had their innocence stolen, may they overcome the darkness and find the light of your heavenly kingdom, we pray to the Lord.
- For those affected by abuse, in all of its forms, that they may find the courage and strength and continue to grow and trust in the love of our Lord, we pray to the Lord.
- For civic leaders entrusted with upholding the common good and justice, that they may act with wisdom grounded in faith, we pray to the Lord.
- The those who provide accompaniment, that they continue their work with grace and compassion imbued with the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord.
- For the Universal Church to recognize and acknowledge our failings, and diligently work to repair past injustices, we pray to the Lord.