Dear Parish Catechetical Leaders,

Welcome to the 2021/2022 academic year! We understand that there still may be much uncertainty as we start the new catechetical year, but it is important that the Church’s commitment to the safety and well-being of our children remains a priority. As such, and in accordance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Diocese of San José will continue to present the VIRTU® Protecting God’s Children 2.0 curriculum as the designated youth safe environment program.

As some of you may recall, we introduced the new version VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children 2.0 curriculum two years ago. The lessons are organized in a three-year cycle so students receive the full range of information from the Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide in small, “digestible” bites, over a three-year period. Unfortunately, the second year of the cycle was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are grateful to renew the three-year cycle this academic year. Please read on for more information.

VIRTUS® Catholic Safe Environment Curriculum (Year 2)

Prior to presenting the VIRTUS® Lessons to your class, please review the Overview of the Teaching Safety Empowering God’s Children Program (Spanish) and the Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide (Spanish) included in this packet.

The 2021/2022 academic year is Year 2 of the three-year cycle. This year, you will be presenting:

- Lesson 3 - Boundaries: You Have Rights!
- Lesson 4 - Secrets, Surprises, and Promises

To access the lesson plans, please visit https://www.dsj.org/protecting-gods-children/virtus-resources-for-teachers-catechist/, and choose lessons 3 & 4 for your age group (also available in Spanish). As always, please select one to two activities from each lesson to present to your students. Your parish may choose to present the lessons on separate days or as a combined lesson. Whenever possible, parents are invited to attend the VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children lesson to encourage the continuation of safety conversations at home.

Opt-Outs

Parental disclosure is critical to the success of this program. All families will be given the opportunity to opt-out of the VIRTUS® Catholic Safe Environment Curriculum. At least two
weeks prior to the presentation, please distribute the *VIRTUS Lesson- Letter to Family* *(Spanish)* and *Opt-Out Form* *(Spanish)*. If families return an opt-out form, please offer the VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children lessons electronically or as a hard copy. Absent students are counted as Opt-Outs and will be offered the VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children lessons electronically or as a hard copy.

**Documentation**

Faith Formation Programs must complete and submit the *Parish VIRTUS Audit Reporting Form*. The audit form asks for three key pieces of data: total number of students enrolled in faith formation program (K-12), total number of students who received VIRTUS lesson, and total number of students who opt-out (including absences).

Please submit the *Parish VIRTUS Audit Reporting Form* no later than **April 30th, 2022**.

**Youth Volunteers**

To be eligible to volunteer at a parish or Catholic school, students up to thirteen-years-old must complete the *VIRTUS® Protecting God’s Children* lesson and review the Diocesan Youth Code of Conduct *(available English and in Spanish)*.

To be eligible to volunteer at a parish or Catholic school, high school students - 9th grade up to their 18th birthday - will need to complete the *VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens 2.0* training available at [www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org) *(Teen Registration Instructions)*. The training must be renewed every two years.

**Questions?**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Griselda Cervantez, Victim Assistance Coordinator and Prevention Advocate, via email Griselda.Cervantez@dsj.org or by phone at 408-983-0225.

The Office for the Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults thanks you for your continued partnership in maintaining a safe environment for our most vulnerable. Together, we will face the uncertainty of the new school year with hope, determination, and prayer.