



My Dear Friends in Christ,

Life is rarely simple. Sadly, for a variety of reasons, some children never have the opportunity to experience a carefree childhood. Over the last ten years, we have learned just how devastating some of those reasons are, as we hear of children who suffer abuse at the hands of a relative, a teacher, or sadly, a member of the clergy or laity acting in the name of the Church.

As Catholics, we believe that every life is sacred. Each person is created in the image and likeness of our loving God. Violence, anger and abuse of any kind are unacceptable, and we have a serious responsibility to work for the end of all violence.

Together, we must be very vigilant moving forward and do everything we can possibly do to protect children. Through our Safe Environment Program, we conduct criminal background checks and train clergy, religious, employees, parents and volunteers. We teach them how to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect of minors and vulnerable adults and how to report suspected abuse. We teach them how to keep our programs safe so the members of our community who participate in those programs are protected at all times. We also recognize the importance of training our children about personal safety and how to talk to their parents or other trusted adults when they need help.

All of our Safe Environment programs were reviewed and approved by the Archdiocesan Review Board, the Office of Catholic Faith Formation and my predecessor, Archbishop Brunett. They were found to be age-appropriate, research-based and consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Upon my arrival in Seattle, I attended Called to Protect for Ministries and found it to be an excellent update on training I had already received.

Throughout sacred scripture, we hear time and again how God uses our dark nights, our time of tragedy and sadness, to bring us closer to Him. Within the Church, some of our darkest nights occurred with the revelation of the sexual abuse crisis. But it is through Him that we will emerge from the darkness and into the light, protecting all of God's vulnerable with a loving heart and allowing our children a carefree childhood.

With every best wish and prayer, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain
Archbishop of Seattle