

FORM LETTER TO INTRODUCE "PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN"

(Date of Letter)

Dear Employees and Volunteers,

In accordance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Dallas Charter, all dioceses in the U.S. are mandated to train all employees and volunteers in how to provide a safe environment for all children. The Diocese of Helena is moving toward full compliance of the Charter and is expecting to have all adults who work with children trained using a program called **Protecting God's Children**[™] produced by VIRTUS®. VIRTUS is the brand name for a risk control and loss prevention platform developed by the National Catholic Risk Retention Group, Inc. to protect children. **Protecting God's Children** is being widely used in many dioceses across the U.S.

Protecting God's Children was developed as a *ministry* to help prevent child sexual abuse in homes, parishes and workplaces. It is a community-based program designed to educate employees, volunteers, parents and other caring adults on how to protect children.

With this in mind, our communities of *(Name of Parish and Missions)* have scheduled a training session using the **Protecting God's Children** program for *(Date, Time and Place of Training)*. I strongly encourage each of you to mark your calendar and plan to attend this important workshop. Please know that this training is *required* for all employees, catechists, and all volunteers who regularly work around children or in a home or hospital setting. This includes, for us, volunteer R.E. teachers, parent volunteers, nursery attendants and ministers to the home-bound and hospitals.

In addition to the **Protecting God's Children** training, we have begun the process of running background checks on all employees and volunteers who regularly work with children or exercise ministry to the home-bound or hospitals. As well, we are distributing the new policy entitled, "*Diocese of Helena Policy Regarding Abuse of Minors, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment*" and a "*Model Code of Pastoral Conduct*" to each employee and volunteer. Copies will be available during the training session for anyone who has not yet received and signed them.

Please remember that, according to diocesan policy, this is a mandatory training for all who work or volunteer with children or other vulnerable populations on behalf of the parish or diocese. We are committed to providing a safe environment for all children entrusted to our care. If you are not able to attend this training session, you must plan to attend another scheduled training in the area within the coming weeks. Please call Ms. Judy Ober on 1-800-584-8914 ext. 21 for a list of training locations, dates and times.

Please call the parish office (*Parish Phone Number and Contact Person*) by (*Date you wish people to confirm especially if they are mandatory trainees*) and confirm your attendance for the (*Date of Workshop*) workshop or whether you need to check on other possible dates hosted in other parishes.

Thank you for your commitment to ministry and our parish and your willingness to ensure that we provide a safe environment for all God's children.

In the peace of Christ,

(Name and Parish of Pastor or Pastoral Administrator)