



Protecting God's Children for Adults

Modeling Good Behavior Every Day

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Let us all remember this: one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the tangible witness of one's life.—Pope Francis

Our work together to protect children is ongoing and never ending. That is what Love is all about. It is the message of the Gospels and the clear and certain teaching of Jesus: "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19: 14).

For adults, living out the message of Christianity is a way of life. It is not only words, but also actions. It permeates the presence of each person so that what remains after an encounter is reminiscent of the "odor of sanctity," said to have been emitted from the Saints who led lives of extraordinary holiness. For example, after an encounter with another person, our presence, good deeds and kindness leave a pleasant odor behind, and the people we speak to are left feeling good about themselves and their life. When we act in this way, we become "manna personalities" defined as "divinely supplied spiritual nourishment." We feed others through nourishing them with our good words, actions and deeds.



It is a good way to look at how we live—do you leave behind a good odor? Do we feed the people we encounter? Even when we have a difficult duty or obligation to perform, there is always a kinder way to do so. With just a little reflection and thought, we can change the way we affect others. The old song from the 1960's comes to mind: "*They'll Know We are Christians*" by our Love (written by Fr. Peter Scholtes and inspired by John 13:35). Being a witness for our Faith in many ways makes us first responders to the situations we encounter along the way. Protecting children is one of those ways in which we all take part. While we may not always think of the ways in which this happens, the small things that we do make a big difference. Consider the following times you may be protecting children each and every day:

- Following rules, without trying to break them or go around them in places where children and minors gather. This sets a good example and goes a long way in offering kids safe spaces.
- Watching and being alert to the behaviors of other adults when there are gatherings of children, serves to protect youth.
- Listening to the children in your life, attending to the details, being interested in their stories—this form of paying attention gives them confidence in the way they communicate with you.
- Talking to kids about safety rules, modeling good behaviors: putting your seat belt on, respecting the environment, being safe when crossing streets—all lead to good practices for kids to follow.

- Helping children who appear lost and getting them to a safe person in charge, and waiting with them until their parents come forward (lost children in stores, etc.).
- Having another adult present with you when you are in a position of trust with kids.
- Being the other safe adult for someone who is ministering to children.
- Making sure you don't curse or act inappropriately in the presence of children and within their earshot.
- Speaking positively about the efforts and programs the Church and other groups are undertaking to protect children.
- Supporting child protection efforts by participating and volunteering.
- Educating children, teaching them and being positive in the way you help them.
- Helping parents when they have their arms full of their children, baby carriages and other things.
- Smiling, nodding with understanding and a kind look when a parent is in a tough situation with their kids and trying to manage.
- Reporting any suspicions of inappropriate behaviors of people you know or don't know to the appropriate leadership, and even the authorities.
- Being present, not ignoring others in need.
- Coaching kid's sports.
- Donating money to agencies that support children and families.
- Praying for the safety of all children and vulnerable persons.
- Being involved in family activities where you can show your leadership.
- Acting on the adage, "if you see something, say something."
- Being trained in safe environment programs, first aid classes, emergency drill protocols, etc.

Proclaiming the Gospels isn't left only to those ordained to the priesthood and diaconate. Each person who hears God's word and takes it into their heart and acts on it, does this effectively and boldly no matter how small the gesture may seem. We contribute to the good of the world and the safety of those entrusted to us by being fully alive and present to God working within us. You don't have to be certified in anything to do this.

It is the time of year when schools are coming back into session and children face new experiences and environments. Why not lend a little support by being aware of how we, as individuals and collectively, can make their world happier, safer and brighter?

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