

MOST REVEREND
LOUIS F. KIHNEMAN, III
BISHOP OF BILOXI



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January 2019

Jesus commanded all His followers to make disciples of the whole world by teaching the Good News He has entrusted to us.

One of the most important ways in which we respond to this command is by sharing the message of Jesus Christ with our young people. At some point in our lives our Catholic faith was shared with us. We in turn must share it with our young people. I am proud that the people of the Diocese of Biloxi have developed many ways in which we provide ministry to youth. We have ten elementary schools and five diocesan high schools offering outstanding Catholic education. Religious education for young people is available throughout our Diocese. Many parishes have youth organizations. Life Teen, Edge and other youth Masses are celebrated in several parishes. Our Diocesan Youth Ministry Office develops activities designed to foster the spiritual growth of young people.

We are blessed by these youth ministries. At the same time we must make certain that our young people are safe when they participate in Church youth programs. In an effort to do this, all Catholic schools of our Diocese, as well as all parish youth ministries and religious education programs conduct safe environment presentations to all young people from pre-kindergarten through high school on an annual basis during Respect Life Week, the first week of October.

The purpose of the program is to explain to young people that they have a dignity as children of God; that they must respect their own dignity and the dignity of others; and that there are appropriate as well as inappropriate ways of touching one another.

I am convinced that the safety of our sons and daughters is enhanced by these efforts. I assure you that the materials are age-appropriate. Teachers are free to use any of the curricula found on the CD entitled "Diocese of Biloxi - Protection of Children" developed by our Religious Education department.

In addition to a safe environment program, the Diocese of Biloxi requires background checks of all clergy, religious men and women, employees and volunteers whose duties include contact with minors and with those individuals who habitually lack or have impaired use of reason. Background checks will be repeated every five years. In addition, I encourage all individuals to take part in a Safe Environment Training Program either at the Diocesan or parish level every five years.

I want to thank all in our Diocese who work untiringly to create the safe environments that protect our children.

May God bless you as we all work together to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from harm so that they may thrive as children of God.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louis Kihneman".

† Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi