

Safe Environment Update (9/21/21)

Accompanying Our Children While on Campus

We recently had a close call where a young child who was thought to be attending Religious Education classes had wandered off campus after going to the restroom. After searching the campus extensively and enlisting the Chattanooga Police to assist, the child ended up safe at home with the parents. There was another recent situation where a child who had been left with older children in the family could not be located for awhile after class. These close calls highlight the importance of our Safe Environment policy:

Children must be accompanied by a PARENT or ADULT guardian at all times while on the Basilica campus. This includes every visit to the restroom, the nursery, the parking lot, the sidewalk, and even walking to class and leaving class.

We are going to be enforcing this policy in all our youth programs and at Mass, and we need your help.

A parent or ADULT guardian must walk the child to the class or program and check in with the adult leader. It is not safe to drop the children off on 8th Street or in the parking lot or to send the child in with an older child.

A parent or ADULT guardian must also pick the child up at the RE building after class.

PARENTS: Do not ask your child to meet you in the parking lot or in the church or on the sidewalk for pickup. Also, **do not assign an older child as a guardian to your younger children while on the Basilica campus.** This practice is unsafe and resulted in the two incidents mentioned previously. We understand that it can be less convenient to walk your children in and out yourself, but it is the only safe way.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: If you see a child walking around or exiting without a parent, **please return the child to the parents or prevent the child from leaving,** and ask other adults for help if needed. It can seem awkward to speak to someone else's child. However, if we look the other way, our community could lose a child. No one wants this to happen to their own child. We need to watch out for one other. We are not a small country parish surrounded by farmland. We are downtown in a city with clear dangers, and we need to act accordingly. Thank you for your help!