



# DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

July 1, 2022

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In accordance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, we have a responsibility to keep children safe from the grave harm of child sexual abuse. In the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, all employees and volunteers 18 years and older are required to complete Catholic Mutual Group's *Safe Haven* training. The training, which identifies real-life abuse and neglect situations that employees and volunteers may encounter, is online and video based. It is comprised of various components to help adults recognize and report signs of abuse or neglect and to increase awareness for protecting children. The diocesan Code of Conduct, the *Policy on Working with Minors*, and other safe environment policies are reviewed during this training as well.

Since 2005, the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois has mandated annual personal safety training for children in Catholic schools and PSR programs. We are committed to educating each child, pre-k through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, with the tools they need to protect themselves, maintain appropriate boundaries, and recognize, resist, and ask for help in unsafe or uncomfortable situations. The diocese utilizes VIRTUS' *Empowering God's Children* program to teach children personal safety concepts. *Empowering God's Children* is an age-appropriate training program which is in accordance with Catholic tradition and theology.

Parents and guardians are the primary educators of their children. We know that this training involves sensitive information, so parents and guardians are asked to give their approval for their child to attend personal safety training. While parent and guardian's choices will be honored, I would encourage you to truly consider allowing your child to attend. To parents and guardians, I extend an open invitation to consider attending the training with your child so discussion and ongoing reinforcement of what your child has learned can continue at home. For more information about the *Empowering God's Children* program or to receive VIRTUS' *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide* booklet, please contact the Office for Safe Environment.

Your desire to serve the Lord through your ministries and your commitment to keep children safe in your communities and in our Church is truly appreciated. I pray God will bless you with the strength and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois