

them how to recognize and avoid situations that could lead to sexual abuse. It also encourages communication between children and their parents so that potentially dangerous situations and incidents are reported promptly.

Our website (www.dioceseofscranton.org) contains comprehensive information about our Child Protection/Safe Environment policies and procedures. In every edition of *The Catholic Light*, we publish a notice about reporting sexual abuse of a minor. We also urge anyone to report incidents of child abuse immediately to the 24-hour PA Child Abuse Hot Line. The toll-free number is 1-800-932-0313.

The goal of these endeavors is to create safe environments for children through education and prevention programs, establishing policies that clearly set standards of behavior regarding contact with minors, and offering support to those who have suffered abuse so that they and their families can experience healing. This is not simply a matter of policy or legal requirements, it is our solemn moral obligation and we take it seriously.

This month, we again observe Child Abuse Prevention Month. While it is fitting that a month is dedicated to this special cause, it is also important to remember that vigilance must be maintained every single day - by all of us. We remain firmly committed to doing everything we can to prevent abuse within our Church, parishes, school communities, and Diocesan run facilities. Most importantly, we are resolved to supporting victims with our compassion and assistance in order to help them achieve healing.

To that end, I ask you to join me in praying first of all for all survivors of abuse. Their suffering is beyond imagining.

I also ask you to pray for dedicated clergy and religious throughout the Church and in our Diocese. Finally, please try to find it within your hearts to pray for the perpetrators of such horrendous acts. Forgiveness and reconciliation, as difficult and demanding as they may be, are the cornerstones of our faith.

Despite the failings of our human nature and the evil that exists in our world, let us not despair. As a People of God, we are a people of hope. Continuing to celebrate Easter and the boundless love and grace offered to us by the Risen Jesus, may we take comfort in his words which assure us, "I am with you always."

Faithfully yours in Christ,

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