



Office of the Archbishop

## Archdiocese of San Antonio

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My brothers and sisters in Christ,

As you are aware, the U.S. Bishops have taken a strong and positive stand for the protection of children and youth. In the Archdiocese of San Antonio we are unconditionally committed to the prevention of abuse through education. This is important to you, as parents, and to all adult Catholics who want to ensure we are following the mandate of Jesus, and "Let the little children come to Me." We want then to be safe from harm and respected in every Catholic parish, school, and institution.

One person, not even one Archdiocese, can protect all children alone. Abuse is an epidemic problem in our entire society but we intend to do everything we can to stop it. We are offering Child Safety instruction to all children, kinder through high school. We will also educate parents who have a responsibility to safeguard the children in their care. Children cannot protect themselves from a predator. We know children need trusted and loving adults in whom they can confide any concern or fear. You are that person and we want to work with you for the good of all children in this Archdiocese.

Sexual predators exist in families and in communities. We do not want children to be afraid of caring adults, but if someone behaves in a manner that makes a child uncomfortable, we want them to know what to do and tell you, or another trusted person, what has happened. Children need to grow up with skills that can help them stay safe for life. Through the youth-serving ministers in religious education, youth ministry, and CYO, we can, and must, reach every child with this important information.

If, however, abuse of someone under 18 years of age occurs, we must report the incident to local law enforcement immediately. While we are working to prevent abuse and protect children from harm, we acknowledge there has been abuse in the past, including abuse by priests. Though this grieves us, we are committed to assist the survivors and ask them to come forward and share their stories. Please call me, another Bishop, or the office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment to make a report we will listen.

We have chosen to act vigorously against interpersonal violence. If you have questions or ideas of ways to create a Safe Environment in your parish, school, and institution, please call the Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment at 210/734-7786 or toll free 1-877/700-1888 and get involved. This is a responsibility we cannot push off on someone else. This is my responsibility, and yours.

With every best wish I remain sincerely yours in the Lord,

+ José H. Gomez

✠ Most Reverend Jose H Gomez, S.T.D.  
Archbishop of San Antonio