



Bulletin from the Diocese of Santa Rosa



Protecting Our Children

February 2009

My Dear People,

Among the greatest concerns we have as adults are our children. The health and welfare of our young people are truly a focus of our attention. In our faith community that same concern exists. We care for our children and young people and strive to educate and form them as disciples of Jesus. I believe the great strength of our Church is our care and concern for our young.

In our parish religious education programs, our parish schools and Catholic high schools and colleges, our Newman Clubs at Sonoma State and Humboldt State, we strive to educate and form our young as committed disciples of Jesus. Parents as well as the general Catholic population support our schools and religious education programs so that all of our youth have grounding in the faith. The funding of these formation efforts is challenging but all of us see the necessity of these schools and programs.

In response to the clergy sexual abuse scandal, the bishops developed the Charter for the Protection and Children and Young People in June of 2002. This document put into place in every diocese in the United States an office to oversee the implementation of the requirements that the bishops committed themselves to. Safe environment programs, background checks on all who have access to our young, yearly outside audits about each diocese's compliance to the Charter, the establishment in each diocese of a Diocesan Review Board to advise the bishop in these matters, a review of all the clergy personnel files to eliminate any offending priest from ministry, and numerous other actions to provide a safe environment for our young. Our Diocese has complied fully with all the requirements, as confirmed by our annual audit.

Also here in the Diocese of Santa Rosa we have an Office of Youth Ministry that is supported by your contributions to the Annual Ministries Appeal. Under the leadership of Stan Cordero this office helps parishes develop and maintain youth programs. Many of our youth have been trained to be leaders to share their faith with others. Each parish is offered help to develop their youth into leader through the efforts of this office. It has worked to develop the Diocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry Council, the Youth Ministry Summit where parishes help to shape the Diocesan Pastoral Plan for Youth Ministry, and the Youth Leader Institute where members from St. Rose, St. Leo the Great, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Apollinaris and St. Bernard High School participated.

The Diocesan Department of Youth Ministry offers throughout the year retreats for our youth, leadership workshops, and programs to assist adults involved in youth ministry in our parishes. Also Stan Cordero has brought together Hispanic Youth leaders to assist in developing parish programs to support our Spanish speaking youth.

We, as Church, must be concerned for our young people. We must be willing to make sacrifices so that they have the education and formation needed to be educated and formed Catholics. I am proud of, and thankful for, the many people who have committed themselves and their energy to providing for our children and young people.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am

Your Brother and Servant in the Lord,

Most Reverend Daniel F. Walsh
Bishop of Santa Rosa