

# PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN: TEACHING SAFETY

## HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

### LESSONS 5 AND 6

#### Introduction to Lesson 5 and 6

**Prayer table** *with candle, bible, cross*

**Opening music: 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World' by Iz**

#### Opening Prayer:

*Prayer cards for each participant with opening and closing prayers*

Loving God, we come before You to ask Your guidance and wisdom so that we may know and do Your will and walk with You each day. We offer these intentions as we begin our prayer together tonight.

- For all young people who suffer abuse that they may feel God's loving arms enfold them and take away their pain.
- For all those who harm young people that they may seek forgiveness and turn away from harming others.
- For all parents and others who care about children and young people that they may learn how to protect them and make sure that they are safe from intentional harm
- Personal intentions

For these intentions and all those that we hold in our hearts, we ask this in the name of Jesus your son, Amen.

#### Overview:

Tonight's gathering of Touching Safety is a part of the Virtus program which was established by the Catholic Church to address the problem of child abuse. Unfortunately, this tragedy – and I truly believe this is a tragedy – of sexual abuse has infiltrated every aspect of your lives: your schools, sports, scouts, jobs, and yes, even churches have be touched by this scandal.

The Catholic Church recognizes this as a serious issue and is dedicated to taking measures to ensure that our church environment is a safe place and that young people have the tools necessary to protect themselves from others who would do them harm.

Mary and I consider it our privilege to be here to talk to you about this difficult subject. You may ask yourselves, 'what could these two 'older' women possibly tell us that is relevant to our lives?' Let's face it Mary is a grandmother and I'm an auntie – but old enough to be your grandmother. In addition to her vast wisdom as a grandmother, Mary is our most dedicated catechist, she has been a confirmation teacher for 15 years, was a pediatric nurse for 28 years, and is a 'certified' prayer warrior. I am a full-time pediatrician, with experience serving a community teen helpline, and a volunteer OLG youth minister for 9 years.

Mary and I have seen a lot in our careers and lives – we have personal and professional experience with young people who have been the victims of abuse of every kind. Too often these victims and their families say 'I didn't know what was happening' or 'I didn't think this would happen to me'. Tonight our goal is that no one leaves this hall saying 'I didn't know'.

Now, this subject material is difficult and we ask that you show your maturity as we talk about this. The statistics about victims are alarming, and it is very likely that there are several teens in this room who are in a dangerous situation, either in the process of being groomed by a predator or have already been victims of abuse. Please be respectful of your peers, because these individuals may be sitting in the chairs near you. In all likelihood, they have not told anyone. There may be a few young people here who will recognize in themselves some of the characteristics on the other side of the equation – maybe having thoughts or behaviors that attempt to control or manipulate their girlfriends, boyfriends, or other vulnerable, perhaps younger children, for selfish reasons instead of the mutual respect and love we owe each other. There is help for anyone who finds themselves in this situation. Our hope is that each of you will be able to engage in healthy relationships.

Tonight we will discuss some of the confusing and frightening things that older teens or adults may do to lure young people into an inappropriate relationship. These behaviors are called 'grooming' behaviors.

Specifically, we'll discuss when is a gift NOT really a gift and when to refuse to go with or do what an adults asks you.

These lessons are designed to give you tools to protect yourselves and others when difficult or dangerous situations arise.

You have the right and responsibility to tell someone if anyone – another teen or adult- does something that leaves you feeling bad, uncomfortable, scared or confused. It may be very difficult to talk about these situations, but telling a trusted adult when something odd happens will keep you safe and help protect others who may be vulnerable, too. Telling a trusted adult can help protect others.

Knowing what to do when someone intrudes upon your boundaries or violates the touching rules can mean the difference between safety and harm. A key element of these touching rules is that you **MUST** tell a trusted adult when someone violates the rules.

Tonight, we will review the characteristics of people who prey on young people; the techniques they use to groom their victims (sometimes including the victims' families); and we will clarify the difference between gift giving that is an expression of pure, wholesome love and friendship and gift giving that is a tool used by people whose intention is to do harm. Also, we'll discuss how to think about possible risks before doing something or going somewhere with someone that may place you in a dangerous or risky situation.

### **Statistics:**

As teens, you are the **most** vulnerable to being preyed upon by sexual predators.

- There are >645,000 registered sex offenders in the U.S and an additional 100,000 lost in the system
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused before adulthood, and sadly, 30-40% are abused by a family member and 50% by someone outside their family whom they know and trust.
- Strangers gain access to young people by participating in the activities that children and teens do in the course of their lives.
- The internet and other social media have significantly eased predators' access to their victims.
- In 82% of online sex crimes against minors, the offender used the victim's social networking sites to gain access to information about the victim's likes and dislikes.

- 65% of offenders used the social network sites to gain home and school information about their victims.
- 26% of offenders used the social networking site to gain information about the victim's whereabouts at a specific time.

### **Profile of Predators:**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=6xS1\\_YTt2tc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=6xS1_YTt2tc)

### **How Predators Groom:**

Children put themselves at great risk by communicating online with individuals they do not know in person. Internet predators intentionally access sites that children visit and can even search for potential victims by location or interest.

If a predator is already communicating with a child, he or she can piece together clues from what the child mentions while online, including parents' names, where the child goes to school, and how far away the child lives from a certain landmark, store, or other location.

Online grooming is a process which can take place in a short time or over an extended period of time. Initial conversations online can appear innocent, but often involve some level of deception. As the predator (usually an adult) attempts to establish a relationship to gain a child's trust, he may initially lie about his age or may never reveal his real age to the child, even after forming an established online relationship. Often, the groomer will know popular music artists, clothing trends, sports team information, or another activity or hobby the child may be interested in, and will try to relate to the child.

These tactics lead children to believe that no one else can understand them or their situation like the groomer. After the child's trust develops, the groomer may use sexually explicit conversations to test boundaries and exploit a child's natural curiosity about sex. Predators often use pornography and child pornography to lower a child's inhibitions and use their adult status to influence and control a child's behavior.

They also flatter and compliment the child excessively and manipulate a child's trust by relating to emotions and insecurities and affirming the child's feelings and choices.

**Remember: The ultimate goal of the “groomer” is to arrange an in-person meeting to engage in sexual relations with the child or teen!**

**Predators will:**

- Prey on teen’s desire for romance, adventure, and sexual information
- Develop trust and secrecy: manipulate the teen by listening to and sympathizing with child’s problems and insecurities
- Affirm feelings and choices of the teen
- Exploit natural sexual curiosities of the teen
- Ease inhibitions by gradually introducing sex into conversations or exposing them to pornography
- Flatter and compliment the teen excessively, sends gifts, and invests time, money, and energy to groom the teen
- Develop an online relationship that is romantic, controlling, and upon which the teen becomes dependent
- Drive a wedge between the teen and his or her parents and friends
- Make promises of an exciting, stress-free life, tailored to the youth’s desires
- Make threats, and often will use teen pornography featuring their victims to blackmail them into silence

**Gift giving that is really not a gift:**

Other than the fact that you really like to get them, what do you think of when I say gift?

A gift is something that is bestowed voluntarily and without compensation. So if you receive a gift, nothing should be expected in return. That means if there is ANY condition or expectation, it is really not a gift.

The intention of the gift must be clear. Sometimes we are tempted to overlook the intention behind the gift because

- It is something that we really want and this is our only chance to get it.
- It might look weird to others if we decline the gift.
- A friend – or someone we think is a friend- is urging us to take the gift.

Some gifts don’t come in packages. Someone buying you lunch, paying for you to go to the movies or sporting event can also be gifts

Someone allowing you to do something that you know your parents would not approve of or to wear something your parents would object to or to go somewhere your parents would not permit you to go may seem like a gift but it is not. The giver may expect something in return – and they may not let you know that immediately.

What are some reasons that people – other than parents and guardians, grandparents, and family members give gifts? What if they ask you to keep it secret?

When someone asks you to keep a secret from your parent or guardian about a gift you are offered, how do you feel?

When someone suggests that you do something that you think your parents would not allow, tell the person you can't do that without your parent's permission. If they persist, then they may not be a person you can trust, even if they were someone you previously thought was trustworthy.

People who say they are your friends and then expect you to do things to prove your friendship or loyalty are not friends.

No matter how tempting it is to go against your parent's wishes, the risk of harm to you is great, and along with God, the people who love you most and most want the best for you are your parents.

Sometimes it's hard to talk to your parents about something like this because perhaps the adult whose behavior is off is a friend of theirs, or worse, a relative. Perhaps you don't want to upset your parents. If that is the case, find another adult that you trust and go to that person for advice and support.

Trust your inner voice. Listen to your instincts and pay attention to the God voice that is telling you whether something is right or wrong.

**Introduction to Movie clip: Juno Chapter 20** (65:39-71:40 when Mark says 'I'm just wondering if I'm ready' and Vanessa says 'Wait a minute'.)

Juno is a movie about a teen who becomes pregnant and decides to give her child to a couple for adoption. Mark and Vanessa are the married couple that Juno believes will make the perfect parents. In a previous scene, Juno goes to their house to show them her baby's ultrasound, and finds Mark home alone. Mark and Juno discover they have similar interests in music, he gives her music

CDs, and they watch a gory movie together. When Vanessa arrives, they cover up what they were doing. Mark and Juno continue their 'special' relationship and this scene takes place later in the movie.... (*Play movie clip*)

### **What did you see going on here?**

'Is Vanessa Here?'

'No, we're safe'

'I have something for you'

- Unconditional gifts—what is the intention behind the gift
- Secrecy, especially from parents
- Trust

### **On-line Grooming behaviors:**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUaN3Q5EU4E&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUaN3Q5EU4E&feature=player_embedded)

### **Predator statistics:**

- Although the majority of this child sex abuse does not occur online, in the internet age, offline sex abuse is fueled by pedophiles' unprecedented access to child pornography online.
- One in seven kids received a sexual solicitation online.[4]
- Over half (56%) of kids sexually solicited online were asked to send a picture; 27% of the pictures were sexually-oriented in nature.[5]
- 44% of sexual solicitors were under the age of 18.[6]
- Four percent of all youth internet users received aggressive sexual solicitations, which threatened to spill over into "real life". These solicitors asked to meet the youth in person, called them on the telephone or sent offline mail, money or gifts. Also, four percent of youth had distressing sexual solicitations that left them feeling upset or extremely afraid.[7]
- Of aggressive sexual solicitations of youth (when the solicitor attempted to establish an offline contact via in-person meeting or phone call), 73% of youth met the solicitor online.[8]
- Sexual solicitations of youth occur:[9]
  - o Chatrooms (37%)

- o Instant Messaging (40%)
- o Other, like gaming devices (21%)
- The more risky behaviors kids engage in online, the more likely they will receive an online sexual solicitation. These risky behaviors include<sup>[10]</sup>:
  - o Posting personal information (50%)
  - o Interacting with online strangers (45%)
  - o Placing strangers on buddy lists (35%)
  - o Sending personal information to strangers (26%)
  - o Visiting X-rated sites (13%)
  - o Talking about sex with strangers (5%)
- 80% of online offenders against youth were eventually explicit with youth about their intentions, and only 5% concealed the fact that they were adults from their victims.<sup>[11]</sup>
- The majority of victims of internet-initiated sex crimes were between 13 to 15 years old; 75% were girls and 25% were boys.<sup>[12]</sup>
- 14 percent of students in 10th-12th grade have accepted an invitation to meet an online stranger in-person and 14 percent of students, who are usually the same individuals, have invited an online stranger to meet them in-person. <sup>[13]</sup>
- 14 percent 7th-9th grade students reported that they had communicated with someone online about sexual things; 11 percent of students reported that they had been asked to talk about sexual things online; 8 percent have been exposed to nude pictures and 7 percent were also asked for nude pictures of themselves online. <sup>[14]</sup>
- 59 percent of 7th-9th grade victims said their perpetrators were a friend they know in-person; 36 percent said it was someone else they know; 21 percent said the cyber offender was a classmate; 19 percent indicated the abuser was an online friend; and 16 percent said it was an online stranger.<sup>[15]</sup>
- Nine percent of children in 7th-9th grade have accepted an online invitation to meet someone in-person and 10 percent have asked someone online to meet them in-person.<sup>[16]</sup>

**On-line predators know exactly what to say, because you tell them exactly what to say.**

**How internet interactions can become a dangerous situation (Trust movie trailer):**



[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwZwWvc\\_2o4&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwZwWvc_2o4&feature=related)

**What did you see in this fictional movie trailer that pertains to the issues of grooming that we've talked about tonight?**

**Alicia's story: a real victim of sexual abuse:**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hR0bXZrIErE&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hR0bXZrIErE&feature=player_embedded)

**How do you reduce your risk on-line?**

Never give anyone online the following information:

- A photograph of you or any of your friends
- Your name
- Your address, city, or state
- Your home or cell phone numbers
- Your social security number
- The name of your school
- The name of your sports team or school colors
- The names of any of your friends

Never allow anyone you meet to upload a photo to your computer. A predator may include a virus or other device in the document that will give them access to everything on your computer and then your identity is no longer secret and your safety is compromised.

**What are some other risky situations and how do you deal with them?**

One way that teenagers may find themselves at risk is if an individual whom the teen trusts invites them to a secluded area – often for what seems to be a logical reason.

Remember: anyone who has your best interests at heart is not going to insist on time alone with you in a secluded area. A trustworthy person will make an effort to be sure that the environment where you meet is open – a place where others are likely to drop by unannounced and where everything is open and above board. Although not everyone who invites you to a secluded location has an evil intention, it is important for you to be careful and always be on guard. Protect yourself. Follow your own instincts. Listen to that uneasy feeling and stay safe.

### **Examples:**

- You are ready to leave work and the store manager asks you, only you, to stay late and help him or her with a special project.
- An adult insists on time alone in a secluded area. For example, a coach who offers private coaching on Saturday or after school or a teacher who offers to tutor you privately at his or her home or in an office with no windows at a time when no one else is going to be around.
- You're on a date and your partner does not honor your limits or wishes.
- You're riding your bike alone after dark:  
<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/article/20120929/NEWS01/120929032/Family-friends-gather-celebrate-Mickey-Shunick?>
- If you find yourself in a situation that suddenly becomes dangerous or risky, what do you do?

### **Where are some places that may pose a danger to you?**

(Photos of old church grounds)

Vintage film about girls fighting off a predator in the bathroom:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fO-LIciNBK0>

And what should they do next? Tell someone what happened!

Video of dog saving teen from assault:

<http://www.lifewithdogs.tv/2012/03/shelter-dog-saves-teen-from-sexual-predator/>

## **Summary and Closing Prayer**

Traveler's Prayer:

My holy Angel Guardian,

Ask the Lord to bless the journey that I undertake,

That it may benefit the health of my soul and body;

That I may reach its end'

And that, returning safe and sound,

I may find my family in good health.

Guard, guide and preserve us throughout the day and night.

Amen.