



PROMISE TO PROTECT

Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

Tips for Talking to Children about Difficult Subjects/News Reports

The topic of sex abuse, particularly child sex abuse, is a daunting one for parents. Every parent must consider many factors, including the best age-appropriate way to discuss the topic. Below are some points to consider, provided by the Office of Child and Youth Protection of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

1. Make sure you are composed before you talk to your child.
2. If you believe your child is aware of news concerning abuse in the diocese, or concerning a priest your family knows, start the conversation. Not talking about a difficult situation can make it even more threatening in your child's mind.
3. Listen carefully to what your child is asking or talking about.
4. Clarify any of your child's concerns before you answer. Sometimes we make assumptions and give far more information than the child needs.
5. Keep your answers simple and brief. Do not answer questions that have not been asked. Do not overload your child with information that is beyond his/her level of understanding.
6. Assure your child that you and other adults who are in charge are doing everything possible to make sure they will be safe. This will give them a sense that adults are actively taking steps to protect those who are currently suffering.
7. Do not make guarantees that such a thing can never happen again. Words like "never" and "always" should be used very carefully, because small children trust that this is a promise from you.
8. Explain that we often do not know why people treat other people badly.
9. Try to limit your child's exposure to media coverage. A child believes what he or she sees on television, or in the newspapers, is true — regardless of whether or not it is, in fact, true.
10. Let your child know the archdiocese is taking many steps to make sure people will no longer be harmed.