



Catholic Diocese of Richmond

Press Release

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'Our Commitment Must Not Wane'

Bishop Knestout Reaffirms Pope Francis' Words During Child Abuse Prevention Month

National Child Abuse Prevention Month is observed in April

(RICHMOND, Va.) – In addressing the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors at the Plenary Assembly March 2024 in Rome, Pope Francis recognized the commission's important work and its continued focus to make the Church an "increasingly safe place for minors and vulnerable adults."

He said, "In confronting the scandal of abuse and the suffering of victims, we might well grow discouraged, since the challenge of restoring the fabric of broken lives and of healing pain is enormous and complex. Yet, our commitment must not wane; indeed, I encourage you to move forward, so that the Church will be, always and everywhere, a place where everyone can feel at home..."

In the Catholic Diocese of Richmond, the Office of Safe Environment (OSE) continues to move forward through efforts to protect minors, the vulnerable and to listen to the voices of victims.

"The Church uses this month as an opportunity to recognize our past weakness and sins, in failing to protect the innocent. We bear within us, as a Church, grief for injuries committed, and regret for our failures and neglect," said Bishop Barry C. Knestout. "As the Holy Father noted, much of our service in accompanying victims and survivors is carried out confidentially. But there are visible signs of our assistance, of our vigilance and the measures taken to safeguard minors."

The action we have taken and the services we provide are published in an [annual report](#) by the Office of Safe Environment. During April, OSE will host multiple events at the Pastoral Center in observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month. They are:

- A [Mass for Victims of Child Abuse](#) livestreamed on **Tuesday, April 16, at 12 p.m.**
- A **Rosary for Children and Families** recited **Thursday, April 18, at 10 a.m.**
Students from Saint Bridget Catholic School, Richmond, will join Bishop Knestout in praying the rosary for those in need of healing.
- **Day of Service for Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Thursday, April 25, 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.** The Pastoral Center staff will partner with [Sleep in Heavenly Peace](#) to build beds and collect bedding for children in need.

For more information on the efforts of the Diocese of Richmond to protect children and the vulnerable, visit the [Office of Safe Environment](#).

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