

Why is it important to know the specifics of the Teachings of the Catholic Church on child sexual abuse?

Knowing what the Church Teaching actually says and that it applies to all children and youth, offers validation to those who have been abused. It also allows the voice of the Church, to be clearly heard.

One out of every five female children and one out of every six male children will be sexually abused before they reach eighteen years of age. Sexual abuse occurs to approximately 18% of all children and youth in the United States of America. The whole society is affected by the pain of sexual abuse of minors.

The basis of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* is found in the Church Teachings of the Catholic Church.

Office of Child and Youth Protection



Church Teachings on the Protection of God's Children

Where can I find the Church Teachings on Child Sexual Abuse and what do they say?

The Church document, "**Familiaris Consortio**" #26 validates the necessity of treating children and youth with respect, something that is profoundly missing when one is sexually abused. The title is *The Rights of Children*: "Special attention must be devoted to children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights. This is true of every child, but it becomes all the more urgent the smaller the child is and the more it is in need of everything, when it is sick, suffering or handicapped."

The Church Teachings also note that sexual abuse of minors is an act of violence. Unlike other sexual sins, such as fornication, sexual abuse of minors is the sin of the adult person perpetrating this form of violence, not the victim. Child sexual abuse in any form is always an "intrinsically evil act".

Catechism of the Catholic Church #2356

"Rape is the forcible violation of the sexual intimacy of another person. It does injury to justice and charity. Rape deeply wounds the respect, freedom, and physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. It causes grave damage that can mark the victim for life. It is always an intrinsically evil act. Graver still is the rape of children committed by parents (incest) or those responsible for the education of the children entrusted to them."

(found in the index of the Catechism of the Catholic Church under violence)

The Office of Child and Youth Protection provides training of adults and children regarding safety of children and youth.

Veritatis Splendor #83

"By acknowledging and teaching the existence of intrinsic evil in given human acts, [as in sexual abuse of minors] the Church remains faithful to the integral truth about [all humanity], she thus respects and promotes the person in their dignity and vocation."

Teaching all to respect minors and that it is their right to live in safe environments is part of Church Teachings.

Through scripture and Catholic teachings we are all called to protect the life and dignity of all human persons. **Preventing child abuse is a necessary response to what we are called to do as Church, God's Church.**

Office of Child
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