



***St. Thomas of Canterbury  
Catholic Church***

August 29, 2009

Dear Parents,

I would like to invite all of you to come to a parent meeting on Tuesday, September 22, 2009 from 7-8:30pm in Becket Hall to introduce you to this year's VIRTUS Safe Environment program that we will be using with our religious education program.

As you may know, Bishop Patrick J. McGrath, in accord with the United States Bishops' *Charter and Essential Norms for the Protection of Children and Young People*, has mandated that all parishes teach the VIRTUS Safe Environment lessons to all children who are registered in religious education.

For purposes of this program, "safe environment" refers to teaching children how to keep themselves and others safe and free from harm at all times. The VIRTUS program focuses on three major aspects:

1. How and when to say NO!
2. When and how to GO!
3. Who and when to TELL!

VIRTUS is a 3-phase program, two lessons each year for three years. The VIRTUS program is broken down into specific age groups and offers age appropriate language and activities. Children in K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 who participate in the VIRTUS program will receive information on appropriate touching, boundaries, private body parts, secrets, rules, safe and unsafe adults and friends, peer pressure, risky situations, personal space, and other safety related topics.

We are presenting the VIRTUS Safe Environment program with the help of Katy Meister, Safe Environment Coordinator for the Diocese of San Jose. Mrs. Meister has several years' experience as a VIRTUS trainer and is available to assist us with answering parent questions and presenting the lessons to the children.

At the parent meeting you will be given the opportunity to preview a short video and receive explanation of the topics that will be presented this year to the children. If you, as a parent (or guardian), decide that you do not want your child to participate in the VIRTUS Safe Environment program, you may at that time sign an "opt-out" form to that effect. You may keep your child home from class on the day we present the safe environment materials. The presentations will be held as following:

- For Early Childhood: Sunday, October 11, 9-10am
- For grades 1-4: Tuesday, October 6, 4-5:15pm
- For grades 5-8: Tuesday, October 6, 7-8:15pm
- For grades 9-12: Saturday, October 17, 2009, 6:30-8:30pm

Alternately, if you prefer to present the materials to your child(ren) at home, we will be happy to provide you with the DVD, lessons and handouts on a check-out basis.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the parent meeting. If you will be unable to attend or have questions, please let me know as soon as possible.

Sincerely,  
*Sherry Scott*  
Catechetical Coordinator