



Made in His Image

Safe Environment Program K – 12

“Respecting All God’s People”

Dear Parents of Sacred Heart Parish Youth Faith Formation Disciples:

The Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls created a Safe Environment Program called *Made in His Image* that they require to be taught to each grade in Youth Faith Formation (YFF) each year. The *Made in His Image* program’s goal is to reinforce the message that we are all created by God in Love, and so, we should respect and love others and ourselves.

The lessons build upon themselves each year with age appropriate lessons and vocabulary. Each grade will review a grade-specific lesson during our YFF Mission year. Please read through the letter provided below, and if you have any questions, please contact Father Brian Simon at #765-2161 or Cell #769-0281.

Letter from the Sioux Falls Diocese

Dear Parent,

Out of concern for all God's people and in response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, we have a program for the safe environment education of children and young people supported and mandated by Bishop Donald DeGrood of the Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls.

Diocese will establish 'safe environment' programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Dioceses will make clear to clergy and members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse.

Article 12 - Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

This program is called *Made in His Image*. It is meant to supplement and be integrated into the excellent programs and curricula for the formation of children and young people in our schools and religious education programs. *Made in His Image* aims to equip our children and young people by arming them with essential knowledge and skills grounded in the richness of our faith. This program helps children and young people to understand their own (and other's) dignity in mind, body, and spirit.

What is *Made in His Image*?

The Catholic Church teaches that God has created each of us as unique and special. Genesis 1:27 tells us that we are created "male and female in God's image" and that God saw this as "very good." In that goodness, we are meant to respect ourselves and everyone else as persons created and loved by God. Adults assist children and young people to recognize God's love by helping them to understand that each of us lives and moves in a circle of grace. You can imagine your own circle of grace by putting your arms above your head then circle down in front of your body including side to side. This circle, front to back, holds who you are in your body and through your senses. It holds your very essence in mind, heart, soul, and sexuality.

Why is it important to help our children understand *Made in His Image*?

God intends our relationships in life to be experiences of divine love. Respectful, nurturing, loving relationships increase our understanding of our own value and help us to love others. It is never too early to help children and young people understand how very special they are and how relationships in life are called to be sacred. Understanding this can help them to protect the special person they are and to be respectful of others. Adults, especially parents, as they strive to provide a safe and protective environment, hold the responsibility to help children and young people understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where children and young people recognize when they are safe or unsafe and know how to bring their concerns, fears, and uncertainties to the trusted adults in their lives.

How is *Made in His Image* Program different from other protection programs?

According to research, one in four girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused by age eighteen. Many protection programs focus on "stranger danger"; however, up to ninety percent (90) of the time the perpetrator of abuse is known to the child or young person such as a relative or family friend. *Made in His Image* goes beyond just protection by helping children and young people understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults.

Please feel free to contact your school or parish office if you have questions or want more information.