

# Keeping Children and Teens **SAFE ONLINE**

Computers and mobile devices can be helpful tools for children and teens to learn and grow in faith and fellowship. Unfortunately, the digital world is also full of unsafe and explicit content. You wouldn't hand a teen the car keys without first teaching them how to drive. The same should be true for using technology—teach them how to keep themselves and others safe while using it.



**You can use the following tips to better protect young people from harm online:**

**1 Model appropriate online behavior for young people.** Children look to their parents to teach and show them the ways to appropriately use technology. The biggest influence on what children see as acceptable or unacceptable is you.

**2 Teach your children not to share private information or images online.** Strangers posing as online friends can try to gain the trust of minors. Personal information such as name, address, and phone number should never be shared with an unknown person. Tell your children to immediately tell a trusted adult if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable.

**3 Limit usage of computers and mobile devices to public spaces in the home.** Not only will this help to prevent young people from accessing unsafe websites, it will also help them to develop safe browsing habits later in life.

**4 Install software that can block or monitor explicit website use.** Open access to harmful websites, like those that include pornography, is a constant threat to

young people. Website filters can prevent access to harmful and explicit sites and some can even alert you when such a site is accessed.

**5 Review and discuss the websites your child has visited and apps they have used.** Oversight of your child or teen's browsing history and app usage can help to keep them safe online. If you notice your child has browsed an unsafe website or app, discuss why that behavior is harmful. Learn about current apps that could be harmful to children and teenagers, especially those that involve image sharing, private communication, or the illusion of privacy.

**6 Report online exploitation of minors to public authorities.** If you become aware of explicit content involving minors, such as solicitation, explicit images or videos, you should submit a report to law enforcement or through resources like CyberTipline from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.



Every April, Catholic parishes and schools across the United States participate in National Child Abuse Prevention Month. While dioceses work year-round to prevent abuse, during this month a special emphasis is placed on the importance of learning how to protect the vulnerable from this evil.

Together, for the next nine days, let's pray that the vulnerable are protected from abuse, and that survivors of abuse may be accompanied on their paths to healing.

# Novena

## for Protection and Healing from Abuse

### Intercessions

- Day 1:** May the most vulnerable be protected from all types of abuse and exploitation.
- Day 2:** May those who have been sexually abused receive comfort and healing.
- Day 3:** May those who work with children and young people be vigilant in protecting them from harm.
- Day 4:** May those who provide help for the abused act with wisdom and compassion in their healing ministries.
- Day 5:** May all families strive to provide safe and nurturing environments for children and young people.

**Day 6:** May all those who have committed abuse acknowledge the harm they have done, repent, and accept justice that ultimately comes from God.

**Day 7:** May those who have been abused receive the courage to tell their story, and may they be believed and supported.

**Day 8:** May Church leaders, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, promote justice and healing for survivors of abuse.

**Day 9:** May our Holy Father, Pope Francis, fulfill his role as good shepherd and protect the most vulnerable in his flock.

### Prayers

*Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be, Prayer for Healing*

### Prayer for Healing

God of endless love,  
ever caring, ever strong,  
always present, always just:  
You gave your only Son  
to save us by the blood of his  
cross.  
Gentle Jesus, shepherd of  
peace,  
join to your own suffering  
the pain of all who have been  
hurt  
in body, mind, and spirit  
by those who betrayed the  
trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize  
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,  
soothe restless hearts with hope,  
steady shaken spirits with faith:  
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,  
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.  
Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,  
heal your people's wounds  
and transform our brokenness.  
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,  
so that we may act with justice  
and find peace in you.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

