



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Renew Faith • Build Communion • Inspire Hope

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Dear Parish and School Families,

As you know, protecting the young people in our parish and school community is one of our top priorities. We believe that part of protecting them includes educating them on how to best advocate for themselves, along with educating them on the dangers that unfortunately exist in this day and age. Teaching young people how to navigate the online world as technology advances so quickly can be an overwhelming task. Therefore, it is with great excitement that we announce the development of a new safe environment program for children; a program created by and for the Diocese of Kalamazoo.

Our new program, the **Goretti Project**, was developed through the collaborative efforts of diocesan staff: Marina Hentz-Shoup (*Associate Director of Safe Environment*), Jillian Kellough (*Associate Superintendent of Schools*), and Tim McNamara (*Associate Director of Evangelization*), along with Chris McKenna, the founder of *Protect Young Eyes* and the *Protect App*. The **Goretti Project** will act as a bridge between parishes/schools and parents, encouraging parents to communicate and discuss important safety topics both at school and at home. This program will focus on physical boundaries and safety, as well as present knowledge and skills that will foster safety in a digital age.

Protecting children from online harm is one of the primary concerns that we hear from parents today. A valuable resource included in your participation in the **Goretti Project** is the *Protect App*. Created by *Protect Young Eyes*, the *Protect App* is a way for amazing parents and caring adults to have quick access to hundreds of bite-sized mini lessons about digital safety. Normally a fee-based app, the Diocese of Kalamazoo will be providing parish and school families access to this amazing resource for free. To do this, each family will download the app and register with their parish or school's unique access code. Your access code will be attached with this letter, along with instructions on how to download and register for the app.

Our diocese looks forward to launching this exciting new program, which we hope will help families, parishes, and schools bridge together in educating those most important in our lives, our children.

In Christ,

Marina Hentz-Shoup
Associate Director of Safe Environment
Secretariat for Catholic Education

Jillian Kellough
Associate Superintendent of Schools
Secretariat for Catholic Education

Tim McNamara
Associate Director of Evangelization
Secretariat for Parish Life & Lay Leadership

**What is The Goretti Project?:**

The Goretti Project (Goretti) is an updated Safe Environment program for children that partners with the power of Protect Young Eyes, a national leader in digital safety. The curriculum and resources of Goretti have been developed and selected to address and support the current needs of today's child, adolescent, and young adult. Essential components of this curriculum include The Protect App (App) and an online portal, valuable resources that will promote communication between parishes, schools, and parents in regard to topics related to navigating both physical and digital environments safely.

Why is there a need for The Goretti Project?:

Our children have countless interactions with the physical and digital world their day. They are asked to make important decisions quickly. As parents, educators, and caring adults, we need tools that are more relevant and accessible so that we can equip our precious children with confidence. The Goretti Project is this tool!

How do I learn more about The Goretti Project?:

- Starting in October 2021, our parish DREs, school Principals, and Safe Environments Coordinators will be given access codes to share so that families can access The Protect App for free (available for both Apple and Android smartphones).-
- Parish and school parents will be asked to complete specific sections of the App for this school year as a way to familiarize them with the App's content.-
- Completely new **in-class lessons** are being created from the ground up, in consultation with PYE. The first batch of these will be rolled out to schools and parishes in the Spring of 2022.
- **At-home lessons** are also in process and on track for Spring 2022. Parents/child will be given access to the Goretti webpage that will feature the lesson with video and resources to engage this material.

FAQs:

Why the heavy parent involvement? The parent-child relationship is critical to develop trust and confidence and fostering conversations around the important topics of having physical boundaries, recognizing safe and unsafe situations, and speaking up for oneself.

Do I need The Protect App? Yes! The app offers easy access to content and other pertinent resources. However, the information for the Goretti Project can be printed off on paper as well.

How do I access the new Goretti Project material? The website is still in development, but this will be accessed through the homepage www.diokzoo.org/gorettiproject.

Does Goretti change "normal" Safe Environments reporting requirements? No. Everything we've done in the past to satisfy reporting requirements for the Diocese are the same. Goretti changes the way we satisfy these requirements in classrooms, parishes, and homes.

How do I access the Protect app?

- Search "Protect Young Eyes" in your app store.
- Tap on "Register" (iPhone) or "Go to Registration" (Android), complete the information, and where it says, "Access Code," enter the code given to you by your parish or school.
- This is our unique access code that we've licensed for our families. **Please do not share this code with others.**
- *Protect Young Eyes* has a number of resources available to families. Please visit them online or on social media.