

Protecting God's Children for Facilitators

Blue Monday and Blue Sunday

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April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. The color representing this commitment is blue. There are a number of ways that parishes and schools can raise awareness during the month of April and draw attention to the need for prevention efforts to increase. Blue Monday and Blue Sunday are two ideas that can help us accomplish our goal of creating safe environments for all God's children.

Blue Monday is a project of the National Exchange Club. The project was created to educate members and the community about the scope, nature, and consequences of child abuse and child sexual abuse and to promote positive efforts in the community to end this problem. The project is simple-every member wears blue on Mondays during April. The intention is to draw attention to the issue by wearing blue, and letting others know what Blue Monday is about. Any school or parish could take on this project as part of a month-long commitment to address this issue in our schools and communities and raise awareness about the plight of many children in our environments.¹

Blue Sunday Child Abuse Prevention is also a project designed to raise awareness about child abuse, child sexual abuse and prevention. The Blue Sunday movement was founded in 1996, in Texas, as a non-profit organization working to promote prevention efforts in churches nationwide. The goal was to bring together Child Protection Services and faith communities to impact this issue. It is "A Day of Prayer for Abused Children and Those Who Rescue them."² The intention of this organization is to prevent further abuse. This project begins with prevention but also includes efforts to provide for those who are victims. As a whole, Blue Sunday concentrates more on providing support for victims and interrupting abuse so that nothing further happens.

The focus of these two programs is the traditional way we have dealt with abuse over the years. However, utilizing these types of resources during the month of April can be valuable and useful for a church interested in raising awareness about this issue.

As US Catholics, we are familiar with preventing child sexual abuse at the source of the problem-identifying risky behavior on behalf of the adult, and learning how to address it. Most others are concentrating their efforts on stopping abuse before it goes any further and providing intervention for victims. While these are worthwhile efforts, they are not enough, by themselves, to stop abuse from happening. However, even a little bit of action can go a long way. Catholic parishes participating in this Blue Sunday project can bring a new awareness to prevention efforts and help further the cause of safe environments across the country.

If your church is looking to draw attention to the issue of child sexual abuse in a positive way during National Child Abuse Prevention Month, being involved with Blue Sunday is a good way to engage. For church administrators, planning activities including the homily and special prayers on Blue Sunday, or on any Sunday within the month of April, is a way to bring the entire faith community together to make a difference. Including information within your bulletin about how April is the National Child Abuse Prevention Month is also helpful for the community.

There is also action that can be taken by church employees and volunteers, who can join the Blue Sunday effort and invite other churches in the community. Calling attention to this risk for our children can only help in our efforts to promote safer environments and protect children from ever encountering an abusive situation. As facilitators, maybe one of the projects you can take on is to personally wear blue every Monday during April, and encourage others to do the same-or even wear blue during your facilitation of the Protecting God's Children (PGC) sessions. Inform the administrators at your parish or school regarding the fact that April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and encourage them to insert information into the bulletin. You could also encourage everyone to come together on Blue Sunday with a special treat to celebrate the work done, and to draw attention to this risk in your community and raise awareness about what we can do to stop it.

Go Blue in April!

Footnotes:

1. You can find more information here: <https://www.nationalexchangeclub.org>

2. You can find more information here: <http://www.bluesunday.org/>

