



Wednesday Prayer

19th Sunday after Pentecost – Our Most Sacred Duty

“If any of you cause one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.”

Mark 9:42

The cost of harming children. Jesus attempts to bring the disciples along through a series of really graphic pains – hanging a millstone around your neck and throwing you into the sea, followed by cutting off various limbs or tearing out your eye if they cause you to sin. Oh Jesus, that gets our attention. So, Jesus is not messing around when he tries to get the disciples to focus on who and what is important in his ministry. Protecting the children, protecting and serving all who are the most vulnerable.

In promoting our upcoming film event, I was asked to share why Cherish All Children’s work is important and why we work to engage churches to prevent sexual exploitation. I shared that children and youth are experiencing significant mental health challenges at an alarming rate over these past several years. As adults, we can come together to learn more and engage in supporting young people as they navigate the pressures of social media, addictive online games and apps, and online exploitation. Identifying how we can best support youth through times of stress, anxiety, and depression will help decrease their vulnerabilities to an exploiter or trafficker. And I shared this quote:

“The protection of children is a society’s most sacred duty.”

~Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Polite, Jr., Justice Department Criminal Division

This, in the context of educating the public about sextortion – one of the fastest growing online crimes. Young boys are specifically being targeted (*and* youth of all genders), tragically resulting in some taking their lives as they feel trapped and afraid. We have the power to stop it. The FBI, Homeland Security, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children are urging parents and caregivers to talk to children about how to prevent this, and what to do if they are targeted online. Here’s a resource to get you started:

[Discussion Guides - Thorn for Parents.](#)

Jesus, guide our conversations with the young people in our lives, that we may share your never-ending love and act on our sacred duty to protect children and all who are vulnerable. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.

Join us Sunday, October 13 for a screening of [Screenagers Next Chapter: Addressing Youth Mental Health in the Digital Age](#) and explore solutions together!