

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish **Bulletin for Teens**

Safeguarding Sunday



Sunday the 13th of September 2026, Safeguarding Sunday, Year A

Safeguarding Sunday is at the end of National Child Protection Week. It is a time when the Church recommits to protecting everyone, but especially children, young people, and everyone who is vulnerable, and making sure that every parish, school, youth group and community is a place where everyone can genuinely feel safe.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus does something that surprised the adults standing around Him. He calls a small child over and places that child right in the middle of the group. He then tells everyone that anyone who causes harm to one of these "little ones" would be better off at the bottom of the sea with a millstone tied around their neck. This is some of the strongest language that Jesus uses in the Gospel. We do well to take heed, but also to extend that same care to everyone.

Safeguarding; We all have a part to play

When you hear the word safeguarding you might think it is something for adults to worry about. But safeguarding is something all of us need to be a part of.



Safeguarding means helping to make sure that everyone in our parish, in our community, is safe, respected, valued and able to participate. While the focus is often on children, young people and the vulnerable, every person has dignity because they were created and loved by God. Jesus showed us again and again that every person matters. Safeguarding is one way we can put that belief into action. We can all work to create a community where everyone feels safe to pray, learn, participate, ask questions, put forward ideas, make friends and be themselves.

What does a safe community look like?

A safe community is a place where people:

- ◆ Treat each other with respect, even when we disagree.
- ◆ Listen when someone says they are uncomfortable or asks us to stop.
- ◆ Feel free to remove themselves and say something when they feel unsafe or are harmed.
- ◆ Respect people's personal space and boundaries.
- ◆ Don't bully, threaten, humiliate or deliberately exclude others, in fact go out of their way to make others welcome and comfortable, to include them.
- ◆ Don't pressure others to do something that they don't want to do.
- ◆ Look out for people who might be lonely, worried or being left out, and do something about it.
- ◆ Know that it is okay to say "No", "Stop" or "I don't like that."
- ◆ Tell a trusted adult when something doesn't seem safe or right.

Safeguarding also means thinking about what we do online. The same respect that applies when we are face to face with people applies in group chats, social media, gaming and messages. Before posting, forwarding or sending something ask yourself: Would I be comfortable if this was said about me, shown to me or broadcast to others? If the answer is no, don't send or post it.

Your boundaries matter

Everyone has boundaries. Boundaries are limits that help us feel safe and comfortable. You are allowed to have boundaries about your body, your personal space, your belongings, your friendships, your conversations, your photos, your online life, and what you are comfortable and uncomfortable with.

You don't have to give someone a hug, share personal information, send a photo or join in something just because someone asks.

And remember that other people's boundaries matter too. If someone tells you no or to stop, respect their answer.

Look out for one another

Safeguarding isn't only about protecting yourself, it is also about noticing when someone else might need help. Maybe you notice that someone is being bullied or excluded. Maybe a friend seems worried about something. Maybe they tell you or show you something that makes you uncomfortable. You don't have to solve the problem yourself. You can listen, take them seriously and help them find a trusted adult. You could say: "I'm glad you told me." "You don't have to deal with this on your own", or "Let's talk to someone who can help."

What is something happens to you?

Sometimes something happens that makes us feel uncomfortable, frightened, confused or unsafe. It is never your fault when someone chooses to hurt, threaten, abuse or seriously disrespect you.

If something happens

1. Get to a safe place. If you feel unsafe or threatened move away and find other people or a trusted adult.
2. Tell someone you trust. This could be a parent, carer, teacher, youth leader, priest, parish staff member or another trusted adult.
3. Keep telling until someone listens. Sometimes the first person you tell may not know what to do. That doesn't mean you should give up. Find someone else and tell them.
4. Don't carry it by yourself. You don't have to investigate what happened or work out what should happen next. Adults who are responsible for safeguarding can help.
5. If someone else tells you something, take it seriously. Listen calmly, don't blame them and don't promise to keep a secret. Help them connect with a trusted adult.

Speaking up is not dobbing.

Remember that: You have dignity; your boundaries matter, you deserve to be safe, other people do too. You can speak up and you don't have to deal with something difficult alone. Our Parish wants to be a community where everyone is safe, welcomed, respected and able to participate.

If something has happened to you, or you are worried about something happening to someone else, please speak to a trusted adult, Fr Mick or contact one of our Parish Safeguarding Volunteers at belconnennorth.safeguarding@cg.org.au. We're also always open to your ideas about how you and other teenagers can participate more fully in the Mass and the parish community. You can let us know by talking to Fr Mick or emailing belconnennorth@cg.org.au.

