



DIOCESE OF METUCHEN

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MSGR. MICHAEL J. CORONA, PA, KCHS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TEL: 732-562-2441
FAX: 732.562.1016
MCORONA@DIOMETUCHEN.ORG
HTTP://DIOMETUCHEN.ORG

April 7, 2017

Dear Parents,

Recently you received a letter from the Prosecutor of your county alerting you to the dangers of the internet, especially for our young people. You may or may not be aware of the legal consequences in which our young people can get involved especially “in sending, sharing, viewing, receiving or possession of indecent visual depictions of oneself or another person.”

Knowing that I grew up in a radically different time, I find it difficult to believe that our society has changed so drastically with all the new technology that is available. However, I must also remember that our children are being influenced by the availability of activities that you and I would never have dreamed of.

I thank God for our Catholic Schools, they strive to instill in our children what it means to be a faith-filled child of God and how a faith-filled child of God ought to live his or her life today.

I do not have on “rose-colored glasses”. I also know that the temptation to sin can sometimes so influence anyone’s behavior so that one can easily buy into living an immoral life style and see it as something good. What is true of us adults is, I believe, doubly true of our children whether they are in high school or elementary school. We must all be concerned. Remember, whether they are 7 years old or 17 years old, they are in their formative years and our Catholic schools endeavor to assist you in giving them the opportunity to grow into the kind of persons you hope and pray for them to be. But you, too, must do your part. Please read over the letter sent from your prosecutor and set the proper boundaries. Reinforce the faith you gave your child on the day of his or her baptism, when you promised to be their first and best of teachers. The example of your lives will make all the difference in the world. We will reinforce your teaching by whatever means we can---especially through prayer, the sacraments and by helping them to know right from wrong and, therefore, how to live moral lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Sincerely in the Lord,

Rev. Msgr. Michael J. Corona, PA, PhD

CC:



MIDDLESEX COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

Andrew C. Carey
County Prosecutor

25 Kirkpatrick Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
732-745-3300
prosecutor@co.middlesex.nj.us

Christopher L. C. Kuberiet
1st Assistant Prosecutor

Gerard P. McAleer
Chief of County Detectives

Deputy 1st Assistants

Christie L. Bevacqua
Brian D. Gillet

April 10, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to warn you about the dangers of the internet, particularly sexting, and I seek your cooperation in keeping all of our children safe. Some parents may be unfamiliar with sexting. It is generally defined as the sending, sharing, viewing, receiving or possession of indecent visual depictions of oneself or another person using a cell phone, tablet, computer or other electronic device. Sexting can take place on countless messaging and social media sites.

Discussing sexting and its legal and social consequences with your children is imperative and may prevent and reduce incidences of it at school and elsewhere. A recent survey revealed that about 20 percent of teen boys and girls have sent "sext" messages. Engaging in this behavior can result in long term social, emotional and legal consequences. Children who share nude or suggestive photos depicting people younger than 18 (even if it is a picture of themselves) can be convicted of crimes under the state and federal child pornography laws.

A person "Endangers the Welfare of a Child," a crime of the second degree (subject to punishment of up to 10 years in New Jersey State Prison), if they knowingly distribute an item depicting the sexual exploitation of a child. Those who photograph or film a child in a prohibited sexual act or simulation of such an act using any device, including a computer or cell phone, etc., to reproduce or reconstruct the image of a child are subject to the same laws.

As an example, a juvenile could be prosecuted for sending nude images of themselves to another juvenile. Additionally, anyone who receives that image and forwards it to just one other person or more can be charged with the Distribution of Child Pornography. Individuals engaging in such conduct face varying degrees of punishment, including, but not limited to, incarceration, detention, sex offender registration, court imposed supervision and restrictions, community service, fines, and counseling.

Living in a digital age is a double-edged sword. The ability to quickly send and receive information can make our lives incredibly convenient. It can also make us and our children incredibly vulnerable. I want to make clear to you and ask that you make clear to your children that once they distribute digital content to the World Wide Web it is impossible to eradicate. It is out there forever. Admissions officers and employers increasingly review the internet to be sure that nothing in a person's past may overshadow a potential acceptance or hire. When something is captured in the digital world, from the past, it may come back to haunt your child, or it can at least be twisted to cast them in a negative light.

Please make sure your child understands the seriousness of exchanging nude photos, and spell out what is, and is not appropriate to send. Please tell your child that under no circumstances should they be taking nude photos of themselves. If someone asks them to create such a photo, video, etc., they should say no and report the same to a trusted adult. Additionally, you should educate yourself on the dangers of the internet and the vulnerabilities your child faces with regard to predators and other persons or businesses looking to exploit your children and their innocence.

I suggest you establish boundaries for appropriate versus inappropriate use of the internet, work with your child to establish consequences if they send inappropriate messages or misuse the internet, and let them know you will randomly monitor their browser history, texts, emails and social media sites. If you come across something that raises a flag regarding the safety of your child or other children, please report any situations that you are aware of to either the local authorities or school administration. Our students should know that we are having common conversations between law enforcement, home and school when it comes to sexting, cyberbullying, and internet use.

I am grateful for your cooperation and support as we all work together to keep our children safe.

Sincerely,



ANDREW C. CAREY
Middlesex County Prosecutor

ACC/sk