

## Talking to Children about Violence as Families of Faith

Dear Families,

Like you, I am reeling this morning. Once again, the unthinkable has happened. Once again, parents are 'weeping for their children, refusing to be comforted for they are no more.' We ask, with the prophets and the people of God everywhere, "How long, O Lord?" Once again, we are wondering how we frame the discussion of violent events for our children. Once again, I wanted to reach out and provide some support and proposed guidance as we struggle to speak to our children about what is happening and what our response should be.

First, as we consider our own families, we can remember that children do not engage with what they see and hear around them in the same ways as adults. Images and sounds are particularly impactful and frightening for them. Young children do not have the ability to distance themselves or contextualize what they see and their first and lasting response is fear. It's a good idea to limit children's exposure to images and sounds that will frighten children and limit exposure to material that is not helpful. It can be challenging when we are trying to remain informed, but try not to watch the news with young children who simply can't process what they're seeing in ways that are helpful.

This does not mean that we as parents should not talk to children about what is occurring or that we should change the subject when children have questions. Children sense and know when something big is happening. We need to have conversations with them and provide context for and a helpful way to process what is occurring and what they are feeling.

Some considerations for daily life...

- Remind children that you and others who love them will do all you/they can to keep them safe. Also, stick to routines as much as possible. Children find familiarity and regular routines very comforting, particularly in scary times.
- Take your cues from your children. They may want to discuss what has happened, and they may not be able or ready to put into language what they're feeling. When language fails, hugs and cuddles go a long way.
- Be mindful of your children's words, reactions, feelings. Do what you can to comfort them and discuss their fears in constructive ways. Help them to be and to feel safe. Answer children's questions simply, but don't feel compelled to point out scary things that are happening.
- Point out the helpers. Wonder about how you as a family and how your children in their own spheres can be helpers too. Even small gestures of

helpfulness can have large impacts and imprints. Do whatever you can to sow seeds of love and peace in the face of violence.

- Be mindful of how you react to the news. What words are you using? How are you describing people? How do you characterize people you agree with? You don't agree with?

I have found this [resource](#) very helpful as I consider how to approach discussions with children and ways to help them frame and process what is happening. Please also Join us at 12 pm TODAY [online on Zoom](#) to pray, lament, grieve, and bring all that we are experiencing, all the pain in the world, to our God who took on the world's suffering as a gift of love. May the God of love and peace hear our prayers and show us how to do God's work of peace and justice in our suffering world.

I pray many blessings on you and your families as we seek to love, guide, protect, and nurture the children in our care.

Warmly,  
Rosemarie

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