

OTHER MEASURES TO MAINTAIN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT in the Diocese of Beaumont

REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS AND ATTENDANCE AT MASS (7-17-09):

In the recent past a few of our pastors have sought advice after being contacted by registered sex offenders inquiring about attending Mass. These offenders were on probation. After consultation with a Criminal District Court Judge, a District Attorney, and three members of the Probation Office, the following steps of due diligence were developed to assist pastors. These steps acknowledge that the baptized have a right to the sacraments, and the Church has a responsibility to maintain a safe environment.

- 1)** When meeting with the offender, obtain the offender's name, address, and phone number for the pastor's confidential records. Request a copy of the probation orders to see the restrictions the Court has placed on the offender and specific conditions pertaining to child safety zones. These must be observed. Obtain the name and contact information of the offender's probation officer.
- 2)** For higher risk offenders, the probation officer may require the offender to obtain a written statement from the pastor stating the pastor has been informed that the individual is a registered sex offender and that the pastor has read the probation conditions and restrictions, especially pertaining to child safety zones. In this case, the pastor is to provide a written, signed & dated statement, keeping a copy for the pastor's files, along with the copy of the probation orders. Also, the pastor is to make notes documenting the visit and the conditions for attending Mass (see #3 below) that the pastor gives to the offender. [It may be helpful if the pastor gives the offender the conditions *in writing*, so the individual has a document for personal reference and for his probation officer.]
- 3)** If the probation orders do not prohibit the offender from attending Church, the pastor is to set the following conditions:
 - a)** Attend the Mass that has the fewest children & youth present. The pastor specifies which Mass this is. [It might be the early morning Mass on Sunday.]
 - b)** Ask the offender to sit in a particular area of the Church, which is usually vacant during that Mass or where children do not sit (perhaps a front pew to the side).
 - c)** Ask if a family member or friend can accompany the offender to Mass each time. This is desirable, but may not be possible if the family members or friends are not Catholic or no longer attend Church.
 - d)** Request that the offender not linger around after Mass but leave the premises promptly.
 - e)** Prohibit the offender from attending other parish events where children and youth will be present.
 - f)** Clarify for the offender that if he does not comply with his probation restrictions while on parish property the pastor will notify the probation officer.
