



Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education
P.O. Box 1033, Alamo CA 94507-7033
Tel.: (925) 831-1661 FAX: (925) 838-8914 E-mail: riak@nospank.net

Web site: Project NoSpank
www.nospank.net
PTAVE is a 501(c)(3)
nonprofit organization
E.I.N. 94-2884062

June 17, 2006

Most Reverend Martin J. Amos
Akron Catholic Center
795 Russell Avenue
Akron, OH 44307-1115

Dear Bishop Amos:

With regard to the US Catholics Bishops' existing program against domestic violence, we respectfully invite the leaders of the US Catholic Conference of Bishops to broaden the usual interpretation of "domestic violence" so that it includes violent treatment of children. Children, after all, are part of the domestic partnership — a key part, we believe — and violence toward them warrants the same serious attention as violence between spouses. It's not a separate or lesser issue.

Dr. Murray Straus, Co-Director of the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire, has written:

A society with little or no hitting of children is likely to result in fewer people who are alienated, depressed, or suicidal, and in fewer violent marriages. The potential benefits for the society as a whole are equally great. These include lower crime rates, especially for violent crimes; increased economic productivity; and less money spent on controlling or treating crime and mental illness... A society that brings up children by caring, humane, and non-violent methods is likely to be less violent, healthier, and wealthier.

More than half a century of research on the subject of child development, and the good example of countless families who raise their children in peace, love and gentleness, confirm Dr. Straus's claim.

Please examine the enclosed draft resolution. We invite you to incorporate it into your campaign against domestic violence. Feel free to improve upon it or use it as it stands.

The ministry of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, initiated a new beginning for mankind. When He preached, "love one another," and admonished us never to "offend little children," that represented a radical departure from the old ways. We hope you will decide that our proposal to advance the protection of children is compatible with the tenets of Christ's ministry, and that it warrants inclusion in your program against domestic violence.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Members of the PTAVE Board of Directors: Laurie A. Couture, M.Ed., LMHC; Al Crowell, M.S., MFT; Peggy Dean, RN; Madeleine Y. Gómez, Ph.D.; Mitch Hall; Tom Johnson; Susan Lawrence; Isabelle Allgood Neal; Viviane Oglevie, M.F.C.C

Jordan Riak, Executive Director

enclosure

Draft Resolution on the Nonviolent Treatment of Children

WHEREAS Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, taught that children are spiritual beings close to God and that whatever we do to the least among us we do to Him;

WHEREAS children's development as social beings is largely determined by the quality of treatment they receive from their primary caretakers and as a result of the examples to which they are exposed within the context of the family;

WHEREAS corporal punishment teaches children that it is acceptable for family members to resolve interpersonal conflicts by hitting one another;

WHEREAS research shows that 25% of infants are hit before they are 6 months old, and that the majority of infant and toddler abuse-related injuries and fatalities are the end result of punishment gone awry;

WHEREAS current research on the development of the human brain proves conclusively that: a) the child's brain is use-dependent, b) what is done to a child in the first three years (respect and love or hitting and humiliation) becomes a part of the structure of the brain, and strongly influences whether a child will become empathic or violent, and c) hitting, especially of the youngest, helps to produce emotionally mutilated, unempathic, cruel adults;

WHEREAS the adoption of policies against corporal punishment of children has proved effective in reducing the incidence of child abuse, and as of June 2006, 16 countries give children legal protection against assault and battery equal to that of adults;

WHEREAS pediatric health professionals, mental health professionals and child development experts worldwide oppose the use of corporal punishment of children;

WHEREAS the only hope that we will truly break the cycle of domestic violence lies in the adoption of nonviolent methods of childrearing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the US Conference of Catholic Bishops incorporate into its current program to counter domestic violence a standing admonition to all parishioners to refrain from the use of corporal punishment against children;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the US Conference of Catholic Bishops urges parishes to make available to parishioners information, guidance and instruction on positive, nonviolent parenting methods.