



THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

How to talk about the Aurora tragedy with children

We are all aware of the shooting and the tragic loss of life and injuries that took place at the midnight premiere of "The Dark Knight Rises" in Aurora, CO, on July 20, 2012.

It is very hard to explain to youngsters why bad things happen to good people.

TV psychologists suggest several ways to talk with all children:

- Be available to listen
- Be calming
- Exercise together – go for walks and play active games with children
- Move away from the television and computer so that they don't have to hear, read, or see the bad news over and over and over again.

I would add the following:

- For small children especially, don't bring up something they don't ask.
- Pray for the victims and for the man who did this terrible thing.
- If the children ask a direct question, answer truthfully and according to their age.
- Don't unload your fears and anger within hearing of your child.

On the website sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration <http://oilspillstress.promoteprevent.org/node/3978> there are resources to help children and adults cope with the crisis caused by the Gulf oil spill. I think this eBook has many useful ideas we can consider at this time, in particular: A Guide to Promoting Resilience in Children: Strengthening the Human Spirit <http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/grotb95b.html>

The following is gleaned from the text of this eBook:

Invite kids to talk about what *they have*, who *they are*, and what *they can do*.

- I have people around me who care and that I can talk to
- I am a person people like and love
- I am respectful of others
- I can talk about what frightens me
- I can find ways to solve my problems
- I can find someone to help me
- I can control myself when I feel like doing something that is not right or dangerous to myself and others.

And as Catholic Christians, we can be peacemakers by refusing to use violence to solve problems.



Father Benedict Groeschel, CFR, once said at a conference: "When you are feeling discouraged or depressed, do something for someone else." Carry out some acts of kindness with your children: bring food to a shelter, gather clothing for the homeless; visit the sick, the homebound, and the elderly (see Matthew 25: 31-40 [31 http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/25](http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/25))

How can we prevent another mass shooting?

Here are some tips from the vast library of VIRTUS Online (sponsored by the National Catholic Risk Retention Group) (www.virtus.org)

- Respect all life
- Reject violence
- Share with others
- Listen to understand

The best preventive advice I found for children and teens (and grownups) requires just a little imagination. Ask yourself before acting: how would I feel if someone did that to me? And if you would not feel good if someone did to you what you are thinking, don't do it. Find an adult you trust and talk about it.

Violence and hate are never good — or the right responses — to any situation. Be a model of peaceful speech and calm demeanor so your children will feel secure.

Show children and teens how non-violence works in your life, how Catholic Christians pay forward the love in our lives and never pay forward – or pay back - the pain.

Sister Rose Pacatte is a Daughter of St. Paul and the director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies in Culver City, CA. She is a noted national and international media literacy specialist and is an award-winning film/TV columnist for several national Catholic publications, as well as the star of RCL Benziger's "Sister Rose Goes to the Movies" website.

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES
How to talk about the Aurora tragedy with children