



YOUR CHILD & THE INTERNET – PHOTOGRAPHS

In Luke 9:48, Jesus said

"Anyone who welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For the least among you all, that is the one who is great."

Children were important to Our Lord, and they should be equally important to us, especially for parents. This article is to inform you of certain dangers that easily can be avoided.

Permission to Use Photo

Parents are given "permission to use" forms from many organizations for which their children are associated — school (including church sponsored schools), sports organizations, and just about any group in which your child participates.

Innocently, most parents sign these forms without much thought. In years past when my children were young, I signed plenty of these forms, but that was before the Internet.

Once you've signed one of these forms, you have absolutely no control on how your child's photo will be used, when or where. You trust the decision-making people of these organizations to be responsible toward your child ... and they usually believe they are. Unfortunately, many of these officials are inadequately informed on the use of children's photos on the Internet. I know — I've dealt with such school officials while maintaining my church's web site. I remember the principal telling me that they were legally in the clear, because they require all parents to sign a blanket photo release form at registration.

Let's Look Closer

Organizations use the photos of children to promote and market their groups to other parents, as well as potential sponsors. Such photos can incite parents to become more involved and current sponsors to see the organizations' success and give more donations. There are truly good reasons to ask for your permission to use your child's photo, especially in the context of your child participating in the organization.

There are several ways your child's photo may be used under a blanket photo release — printed brochures, on special promotion flyers, direct mail campaigns, local and organization newspapers/newsletters, embedded in web site pages, and so on.

When used in everything other than the newspapers or in web pages, the viewing of the photos is going to be limited in scope. Such use is statistically harmless; and as a previous marketing director for a statewide firm, I would have no problem with such use of a child's photo with the parent's permission.

Local newspapers have a much wider circulation and viewing potential; yet, the photo is generally run in only one issue, which limits viewing potential. If the photo is connected with a newsworthy event, the potential to again use the photo by the newspaper or even being picked up by the local television stations increases. This is seldom the case, however; so again, I would not as a parent be concerned here, especially if only your child's first name is used. Even a one-time television story has limited viewing in the overall scheme of things; however, it is worth noting that TV news shows do put videos from their programs onto their web sites.

The Internet and web pages are a different story, especially search engines. That's what I'll discuss herein.

What's Wrong with the Internet?

For the most part, most children's organizations, especially schools and church youth groups, have policies not to use photos of children on their web pages — but, unfortunately, not all. The danger for children of those organizations that do not have such policies is potential pedophiles, who use the Internet search engines as a shopping cart for potential victims.

Look at How Easy It Is ...

The Internet allows pedophiles instant access to other predators worldwide, where they discuss their sexual preferences and share ideas of how to find and lure victims. The Internet also gives them instant access to potential child victims and the ability to track those children to their homes, schools or youth organizations.

Let me show you how!

I went to the Google® search directory and typed in the words: "catholic elementary school" iowa
I added my own state to make it more local – this is a November 2015 search.

In the graphic below, you'll notice that I've circled a search option in red. That's what I clicked for my search — the same option a real pedophile uses.

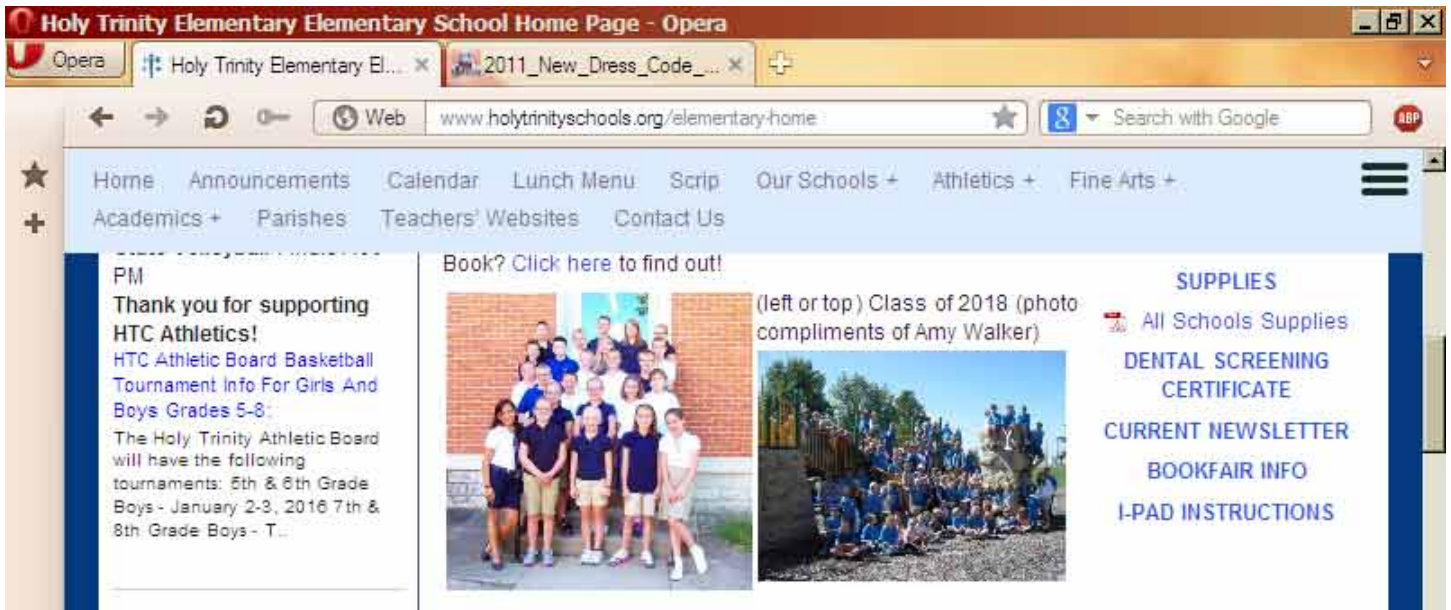


Let's pretend I'm a pedophile looking for a potential victim. Here is just one row of my search results:

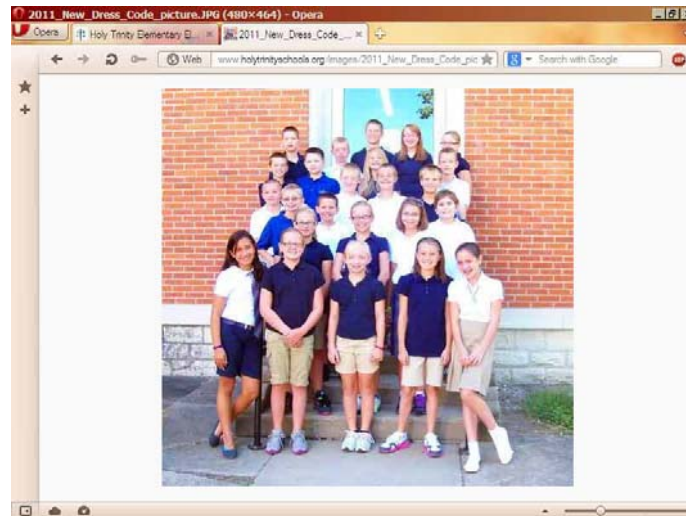


I clicked "next" ONLY 2 times to reach this full frontal, highly recognizable photo of these children; and you can bet a predator will take all the time necessary to find children who fit his particular pedophilia preferences. I will use this photo that I circled for my example. (If one of these children is yours, then you need to have a serious discussion with your school.)

If I click on the photo I circled in red, it takes me to this page, where I scrolled down to locate the photo from the search engine:



Now, I can right-click on the photo to get a closer look:



Now, the photo above doesn't look very clear, but that is only because I had to resize it to fit this page. Here's exactly how clear the photo actually appears in my browser:



And if I wish to have an even better look, I use software to enlarge it further:



Remember, once I'm on an organization's web site, I can view all of their pages to search for even more photos of potential victims.

Once I've chosen my intended victim, I only have to locate the physical address of the organization:



On their contact information page, I find this:



Now, all I have to do is "stake out" the school grounds by pretending to be someone who belongs in the area. Once I spy my selected victim, I only need stalk him or her each day until I get my chance to take the child! It's as simple as that. **Scary — isn't it?**

This example shows students with full, frontal, identifiable faces in several photos on their web site. They're not as bad as the example I used in 2007, which still shows "tons" of such photos: <http://saintalbertschools.org/>. Quite a resource for a pedophile located in Council Bluffs or a nearby city.

And if you believe that someone would spot a pedophile, guess again. They look just like you and me. Check out the [Sex Offender Registry](#) for your area. You'll see that many look like your friends or acquaintances — usually just generic-looking people. And remember, though rare, there are female pedophiles.

How Photos Get into Search Engine Databases

Looking only at the Google search engine (though all major search engines/directories have image databases that may be searched), their crawler visited the web pages of my parish each month from March through September 2007 (back when I originally wrote this article), but this is still typical. They pick up several pages at each visit (to crawl the entire site at one visit would create a bandwidth problem for web site owners).

[Back to main page](#)

Robots/Spiders visitors			
16 different robots	Hits	Bandwidth	Last visit
Unknown robot (identified by 'crawl')	663+1	5.96 MB	04 Nov 2015 - 19:16
Unknown robot (identified by 'bot' followed by a space or one of the following characters _+;,;/\~)	235+80	14.40 MB	07 Nov 2015 - 05:32
Googlebot	231+8	2.35 MB	07 Nov 2015 - 04:51
Unknown robot (identified by 'spider')	106+6	19.70 MB	06 Nov 2015 - 21:03
Bing Preview bot	66	911.15 KB	06 Nov 2015 - 11:23
A PHP script	23	266.06 KB	05 Nov 2015 - 12:47
Unknown robot (identified by 'robot')	15+3	92.37 KB	06 Nov 2015 - 19:35
MSNBOT-media	14+2	16.46 MB	05 Nov 2015 - 09:48
Yahoo Slurp	4+8	1.41 MB	07 Nov 2015 - 01:37
Unknown robot (identified by hit on 'robots.txt')	0+10	850 Bytes	05 Nov 2015 - 03:14
Googlebot-Image	9	139.27 KB	06 Nov 2015 - 23:11
Google Web Preview	8	149.27 KB	05 Nov 2015 - 19:51
Unknown robot (identified by 'bot' preceded by a space or one of the following characters _+;,;/\~)	6+1	85 Bytes	05 Nov 2015 - 01:40
Unknown robot (identified by empty user agent string)	2	40.49 KB	05 Nov 2015 - 02:45
Netcraft	2	36.69 KB	06 Nov 2015 - 18:27
MSNBOT	1	15.92 KB	01 Nov 2015 - 06:17

The above is from the statistical report for the Faith – Make It Real web site. It's for November 2015, but get this — it only covers from November 1st to today, November 7th. I've already had 16 different robots for search engines and directories crawling my site in just 7 days. Think about how many different places your child's photo could be on the Internet with people copying it to use for their own purposes.

In March 2007, Google **Images** (the exact type of search I used in my earlier example) referred 12 unique visitors to the web site of my church's school. They referred nine visitors in April. These visitors were not looking for info on the school but were looking only for the graphics/photos. Such referrals stopped at that point. Our images at my parish and school's web site were then removed from the Google Image database. Here's why:

- After the search engine has crawled a site so many times, the images gathered are randomly reviewed,
- I ensured when I created their sites that all photos (for the most part) were stock photos, which are copyrighted and of models who pose for the photos,
- To leave the photos in the database for Internet viewing would open Google up to potential lawsuits by the photo owners (copyright holders), who are generally professional photographers, and
- It's easier to remove all images from such a web site, than to sift through the images for those that are not stock photos.

An organization's photos will then not appear in the "images" section of search engines/directories, but the site still will appear in the "web" section, where you want it to be.

Now, you might think this would protect children's photos from ever getting into a search database but guess again. As soon as you begin putting non-stock photos on a web site, the images will begin showing up in the search databases, because they never stop crawling a web site on a monthly basis.

Even though all images are protected by copyright law, owners of search engines and directories believe that non-professional photographers do not bring such lawsuits, since they do not make their living in this manner. Plus, few non-professionals would know their rights under copyright law.

So, if you give blanket permission for any organization to use your child's photo, it could end up in a search engine/directory database — or several. And once it's on the Internet, it's there forever — copied by people who want the photo for whatever reason or in web site archive sites.

The Threat Is Real

In case you believe this is happening only in my city, it's time for a reality check. Sexual abuse of children is a global problem!

Here's an Example

I researched my city area on October 22, 2007, when I first wrote this article. The following is what I found.

The population in the State of Iowa was 2,966,334, of which 0.205 percent were sex offenders (see www.iowasexoffender.com). That's 6,098 registered sex offenders in my state — double the amount of a neighboring state.

NOTE: As of today in November 2015, our state population has grown to 3,046,355, while the number of sex offenders has dropped to 5,134, which means the decrease is either due to one of the following — many have:

- *Died*
- *Moved out of state*
- *Moved still within the area/state but failed to reregister their new address and the registry was notified they are no longer at the previous address, or*
- *Fell off the registry (they are only required to register for 10 years after release from prison)*

In 2007, there were 449 registered sex offenders in Polk County of Iowa, which doesn't include every registered sex offender and doesn't include those who are off the radar and not registered.

Of those, 353 registered sex offenders were in Des Moines (where I live), many of which had up to five convictions for sexual abuse of children.

Of the 353 sex offenders registered as being in Des Moines:

- There were 8 convictions for sexual crimes against males ages 14-17
- There were 80 convictions for sexual crimes against females ages 14-17
- There were 31 convictions for sexual crimes against males ages 0-13, which means even children under the age of 1 year

- There were 152 convictions for sexual crimes against females ages 0-13, also including children under the age of 1 year

The previous numbers do not include convictions listed with the victim's gender and/or age listed as unknown — and there were plenty of these in the database. Some of these offenders are in jail or deported; however, the majority were living in my city.

I also found that many offenders were indiscriminate as to age or gender.

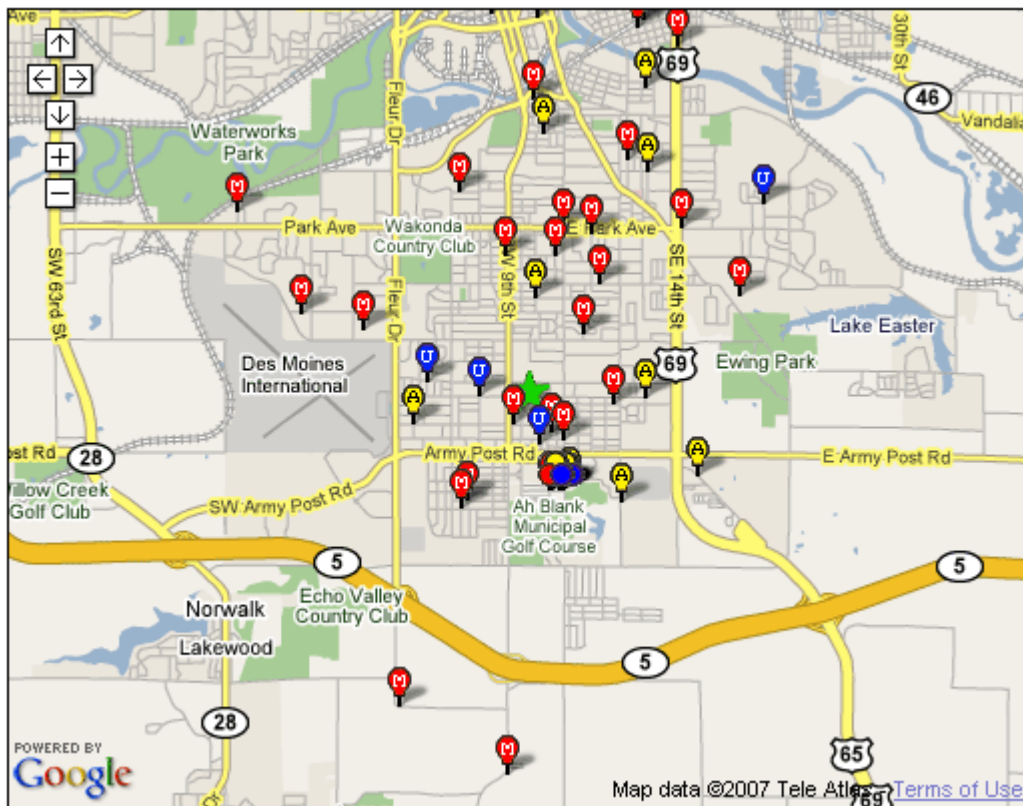
So, just because an offender's crime was against an adult victim (not in my tally above), doesn't mean he/she won't offend against a child.

The noted convictions included indecent exposure, assault with intent to commit sexual abuse, lascivious conduct with a minor, criminal sexual conduct (in varying degrees), carnal abuse (in varying degrees), indecent contact with a child, sexual abuse (in varying degrees), false imprisonment of a minor, attempted rape, sexual assault (in varying degrees), and sexual exploitation of a minor.

Chilling statistics, to say the least!

Here are the marked locations of registered sex offenders within 3 miles of my parish in October 2007, which has a school from pre-kindergarten through 8th grade (one offender is only a block from the school — the red Ms are for those who committed offenses against children, the blue Us have victims with unknown age/gender, and the yellow As had adult victims):

The school is located in the middle of all the lettered "tacks".



And if you're still not convinced:

- According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2007:

- Approximately 4,300 child molesters were released from prisons in 15 states in the year 1994. An estimated 3.3% of these offenders were rearrested for another sex crime against a child within 3 years of release from prison.
- Of these same released offenders, 60% had been in prison for molesting a child 13 years old or younger.
- In the same year, there were approximately 234,000 offenders convicted of rape or sexual assault under the care, custody or control of a correction agency. Nearly 60% of these offenders were then under conditional supervision within the community.
- In 1991, an estimated 24% of those serving time for rape and 19% of those serving time for sexual assault had been on probation or parole at the time of the offense for which they were in State prisons.
- Between 250,000 and 500,000 pedophiles resided in the U.S. in 2007.
- According to *The Gallup Poll*, December 1995, 1.3 million children were sexually assaulted in 1995.
- According to *Forward*, 1993, there were an estimated 60 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse in the U.S. in 2007.
- According to *Sorensen & Snow*, 1991, there was an increase in child sexual abuse by a reported 322% from 1980 to 1990. (I can't even begin to wonder at that statistic today.)
- According to *Russel*, 1983; *Finkelhor*, 1978; *DeFrancis*, 1969, one in four girls will be sexually abused by age 18.
- According to *Nielson*, 1983; *Sgroi*, 1978, one in six boys will be sexually abused by age 18.
- According to Lonnie Bristow, M.D., President, *American Medical Association*, November 1995, "Sexual assault continues to represent the most rapidly growing violent crime in America, claiming a victim every 4 seconds. Over 61% of female victims are under the age of 18."
- According to a study by Dr. Gene G. Abel of *Emory University*, convicted child molesters who abused girls had an average of **52 victims each**. Of those who molested boys, they had an average of **150 victims each**.
- According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 1988, the typical child sex offender molests an average of **117 children**, most of whom do not report the crime.

What Should You Do?

Once an image/photo is online, there is no getting it back. It can be passed across the Internet with lightening speed. So, how can you protect your child?

There are a few things you can and should do. Here is some food for thought:

- **At the Organization Level.** Ensure that any organization your child is involved in has a policy of not putting photos of children on their web site, which means they only use stock photos. If they do not have this policy, then gather together the other parents and insist they make a change in their web site use policy.

NOTE: It's safe to embed a photo into a .pdf file, as long as it's not on page 1. These files are indexed in the normal "Web" search database, which show only the first page of the documents. Predators are

not going to waste their time having to open pdfs, which take more time to open on a computer, "in hopes" of finding a potential victim — not when they can "shop" using the image database.

- **The Permission Form.** Here you have two choices:
 - **Don't Sign It** — You could just write your child's name at the top of the form, write "NO" in large letters across the form, and send/give it back. Then, you'll never worry about the situation. That will severely hurt the organization's efforts to improve itself and your child's experience (fundraising efforts and getting adult volunteers to run many of the youth programs).
 - **Write Exceptions on the Form** — You could complete the form, write "I DO NOT give my permission for my child's photo being used for any Internet or email use" on the form, and then sign it, but only if they're willing to give you a copy of the completed form right there and then — ask before you write. (Tear up the form, if they say they can't make a copy right then and you've already completed the form. Don't trust "we'll mail you a copy".) This allows the organization to use a photo within their print media marketing efforts but not for the Internet.

In Summary ...

I wrote this article in order to inform parents. Most organization officials do not know the potential repercussions of posting a child's photo online, any more than most parents. Unless you deal with the Internet on a regular basis, which I have for many years, there would be no reason for you to know this information. Yet, it's extremely important.

In addition to the organizations, you should look inward, as well.

- You nor your children should put your child's photo on your personal web site, blogs, and especially not on social media, such as Facebook®.
- Even if you're extremely good at checking and setting all of their privacy settings every month, you cannot know if all of your Facebook friends — and their Facebook friends — are as diligent (and it takes a monthly review to keep your page private; Facebook especially makes changes constantly and resets your privacy settings to public in order to expose your pages for better search engine ratings — and you have to set the privacy in a multitude of settings now on a multitude of different pages and locations, where it used to be only one setting; and if you forget to set a status post from public to friends, all other posts go public until you manually reset it to friends).
- Also, most Facebook and other social media users indiscriminately okay everyone's friend request, leaving anyone whose post appears on their page through likes, shares and comments publicly exposed. Think about how quickly some posts go viral but began as posts to "friends" on someone's personal page.
- You also need to review your child's social media pages, cell phone entries (especially texts), and any other online places your child visits. Or just don't allow them on social media until they reach a particular age and still you should do frequent reviews. Remember, you pay for the devices and you're the parent, so don't let them whine or argue you out of it.
- Always keep computers in the livingroom, where you can monitor its use. Bedroom computer use by a child can lead to all kinds of problems.
- Pedophiles love social media sites and are extremely good at impersonating other children to lure your child into a false sense of security, even meeting this supposed "child" for real!

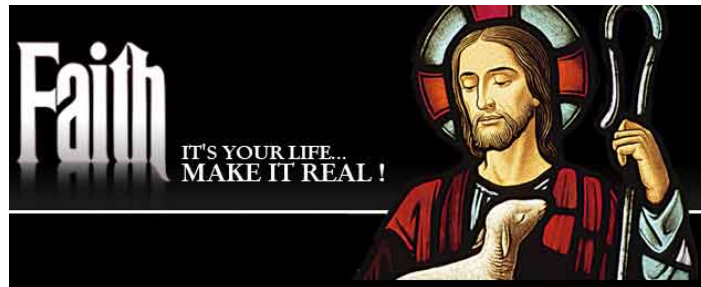
If you don't ensure their safety, you certainly cannot count on someone else to do it for you, especially on the Internet.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD BEGINS WITH **YOU!**

I hope this article has helped you more fully understand the dangers discussed here. Thank you for taking your time to read it.

Please feel free to share this document with others, including placing it on other web sites without asking for my permission — as long as it's in its complete form, including my information below.

Sincerely,
Patricia Hawke



Faith-MakeItReal.com