WISE and HONORING REPRESENTATIONS of CHILDREN in MEDIA

Whether child or adult, a person's physical image and story represent them. These representations are part of who they are. So photos, film, and stories of any person should be created and shared only in ways that respect their wishes and affirm their dignity as beings made in the image of God. When it comes to children, wise use of images is also an act of child protection – honoring each child's dignity and guarding them from voyeurism and exploitation.

9 Key Principles for Practice:

1 **Consent is key.** Always ask permission of both child and caregiver before taking a child's picture or sharing their story. Share with them the ways you may use an image or story if they grant permission. Receiving a signed or electronic release (see Easy Release App) is best.

2 **Know the law.** Educate yourself on local laws pertaining to media and vulnerable children where the child lives. In some countries, it is illegal to take pictures of children who are in state custody.

3 **Know the culture.** If traveling in another culture, ask a contact with deep knowledge of the culture to inform you of culturally appropriate practices related to images and media.

4 **Keep it public.** All stories or images should be gathered in supervised, public spaces.

5 **Keep it pure.** Always make sure children are appropriately clothed and that their pose/position carries no hint of sexual suggestiveness.

6 **Screen professionals.** If employing a photographer, journalist, or translator to assist in capturing stories or images, ensure they been properly screened and references checked.

7 **Check organization/agency standards.** If a child is in the care of a school, children's home or other organization, inquire about any rules regarding the use of images or information.

8 **De-identify.** Remove identifying information from images and stories to prevent tracing of a child to his or her home or community. Avoid distinctive landmarks and street signs in the background, and disable geotagging. When appropriate, change details in a story, such as name, location, school name, etc.

9 **Convey human dignity.** Above all, present every child as a person, not merely an emblem of need or object of compassion. Seek to reveal a child's gifts – strength, beauty, hope, competence – alongside their needs.

7 Questions for Consideration:

"All things are lawful, but not all things build up."
– I Corinthians 10:23b

Some of the most important considerations regarding photography, film and stories aren't necessarily "right or wrong" decisions. They often require discernment between "acceptable," "better" and "best." The following question are offered for personal reflection and thoughtful discussion with others who aim to do the very best for children in every situation.

1 **Altered experience.** Consider how taking photos/videos subtly alters the time we have with another person. We are less able to experience a moment together (now), when we are capturing that moment (for later use). What might be lost in this trade?

2 **Being photographed.** Consider how being photographed by a stranger might feel. How might that become a barrier to a fuller relationship? How might the experience of being frequently photographed by visitors impact a child over time?

3 **Your children.** In what situations would you be comfortable with strangers taking images of your child or sharing your child's stories? How would you want them to be represented?

4 **Motives.** What motivates you to share an image or story? Is it necessary to show a child's image to accomplish this purpose, or could it be done in another way?

5 **Unspoken messages.** If you were from the child's region/country or culture, would you have concerns about what the images/story might imply about your country or culture? Are the images/stories playing into classic stereotypes that omit or distort a fuller story?

6 **Who benefits?** Will it benefit the children for you to share their story? What might the positive and negative consequences be for them?

7 **Audience.** Who is the audience for the image or story? How will this teach them? What is the purpose? What is the plan for follow-up?

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