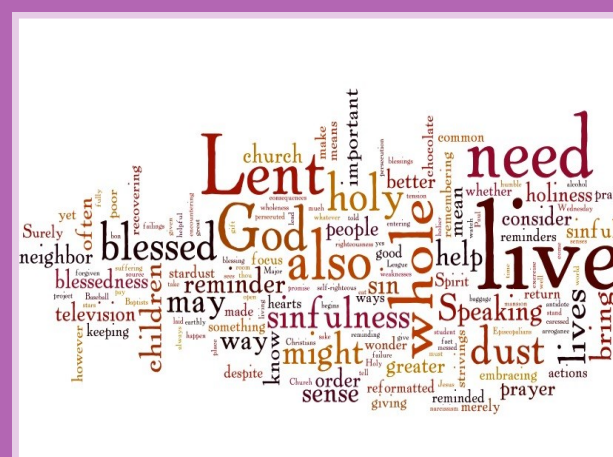




Safe Environment Newsletter February 2018



A few days ago I was having a conversation with a dear friend of mine. She is experiencing a life change that at times, can be down right frightening. It has placed so many demands on her everyday living and is putting her faith to the test. Some days I hear the confidence in her voice and some days it just isn't there anymore. Fear had seized her that morning.

She had called me on my way to work. The moment I answered my phone, I knew my role was to just simply *listen* to her. Let her get angry. Encourage her to cry. And just be comfortable with the silence on the other end when she needed a period of quiet.

I realized after a while, those long periods of uncomfortable silence between us became the essential break in conversation for me to ask God, "How do I respond, if that is what YOU want me to do? Come on God, I need your words, not mine." In the past my own words have backfired on me. Like an explosion.

When I offend my friend, it's just about the most uncomfortable feeling I have.

As I prayed during our silence, our conversation turned and without all the searching and racing that goes on in my mind, HE supplied me with soft words to say "HE will keep caring for you and all your worries just like HE's been doing. That caring isn't going to stop or change this afternoon or tomorrow or the next day."


HE also gave me the words to remind her how I have seen her pull GOD in and push GOD out and when she pulls HIM in that is what always carries her through.


It was an opportunity for me to ask her once again, if she is reading something spiritual everyday and to remind myself to continue doing the same.

Before we ended our conversation we assured each other that GOD is bigger than any day we face, bigger than the fear or any person who causes us grief or harm. It was a beautiful back and forth between us. When we hung up, I got out of the car and breathed a quick "thank you" and that still small voice nudged me and said, "That one's a reminder for you too, when **you** doubt me." I love the unintentional lessons I learn from my friend, through God.


Local Administrators


A few weeks back MSP offered a day long seminar on safety in Worship Spaces. An invitation was sent to all Business Office Administrators as well, inviting them to attend . There is now a no cost seminar that is being offered and will be held in two locations, Hastings and the Detroit area . It appears this seminar gives practical advice for churches and many safety and medical related training. This is not mandatory for your parish just an invitation if interested. A best practice is to contact your local law enforcement and invite them to your parish and spend time talking about the physical surrounding and how you can improve any areas of concern. A good start is to keep a binder of emergency numbers as well as hospital numbers on **and** off site and easily accessible. Please include your pastor in the initial conversation so he can partner in areas where time allows.

 Opt out forms for the Safe Sheep and Called to Protect (Praesidium) training programs are on the Diocese of Lansing website (English and Spanish). Please be sure that any parent opting their child out of one of these trainings completes that Opt Out Form and returns the form to whoever the designated person is at your location. A copy of those forms is required to be on file in the Child and Youth Protection office at the Diocese. Please mail to Reba Sommer 228 N. Walnut St. Lansing MI 48933

 School Principals and LASOs, MSP is relying on you to let them know if you see something in the new CHRISS system that is confusing or doesn't seem quite right. If enough feedback is given to them, they will look into the issue. It is the only way they know if their system is working for you. You can call or email them.

MSP-CJIC-ATS@Michigan.gov or 517-284-3022

 Please take some time to walk through your parish/school and be very mindful of any areas that could be a potential safety concern. Our commitment to safe spaces are for minors AND adults in all of our locations. Windows must be installed on ALL office and classroom doors, out of the way meeting spaces of any kind should be revisited. Accordion doors used for classrooms must be addressed. If you have any concerns or questions please call or ask me to come and we can look at your areas together.

 I have created some how to videos in VIRTUS. They are quick tips on **How To Create A Master List, Remove Names From Your List, What Does Awaiting Approval Mean and How To Document a Background.** The videos are inspired by the questions that I most frequently get from you. If you care to view them send me a quick email and I will email them to you. If you think of other areas that might be helpful please let me know.

Reba Sommer
Diocese of Lansing
Safe Environment Coordinator
rsommer@dioceseoflansing.org