

Pastor's Corner - May 22 & 29, 2011

First of all, I like to thank all those who were so kind on my 71st birthday to shower me with prayers, well wishes and gifts of all kinds. It is good to live in this faith community of ours, even if all the goodies may affect the length of my pant belts!

On several occasions in the past few months I have written about the Responsible Ministry and Safe Environment Policy which the Diocese is in the process of finalizing and now step by step implementing. We are not the only Diocese which is developing such a policy. All the Dioceses in Canada are doing so as well as many other voluntary organizations which are involved in reaching out to people. This is in fact evident by our local police departments telling us that they are overwhelmed with requests for police background checks and that a much longer time is needed for the processing of all those applications. The staff and volunteers who are required to have a police check (in high or medium risk activities) have now mostly applied for these checks and will most likely have been processed by the end of July.

Our Diocesan policy is still in draft form but will have final approval before the end of June and will include a series of protocols and checks and balances. I have to emphasize that not only are these policies and procedures required by law and insurance stipulations but they are also being required for the protection, well-being and security of both the persons we are in contact with as well as for the volunteers and staff of our ministries. Yes, at times the filling in of various forms, the criminal background checks, the changes in the way we will have to minister, may seem bureaucratic, but they are needed to protect us all. Yes, I think everyone realizes that it may seem at first to take away something of the sacredness of our ministries and of our human interactions. However, with time we may be able to adapt to the new situation and find new ways to assure these qualities.

All those who volunteer in any way in the parish will have to at least fill-in an application / registration form as well as a Covenant of Care form. If in doubt, please, ask Gary Koett or myself whether you need to do so. These forms are available at the entrance of each of our two churches. Please, read and fill-in these forms carefully, sign them where appropriate, hand them in to us or bring them to the office. I have assigned Gary Koett as the Parish Responsible Ministry (PRM) Coordinator who coordinates the registration and filing of the necessary forms as well as ensuring that the various directives are being implemented as required. We have found a person who will assist him in this task that requires confidentiality.

As I stated previously we already had implemented many of the requirements in some of our ministries, such as the religious education classes. However, we will need to ensure that the regulations are in fact enforced. We will also need to make some physical changes to the doors of our meeting areas, offices, confessional, etc. so that an opaque area is included in the entrances.

More importantly, however, we will need to approach some of our ministries in a different way. Our home visits to bring communion as well as our visits to institutions such as Resthaven need to be done by two persons, not one. We do not have enough volunteers to do so at the moment; that is why we have asked for more people to come forward. We also ask family members to come forward to bring communion to members of their family. We may need to curtail the frequency in which visits are going to be made e.g. every two weeks. Please, take this into consideration. Eventually we may need to do the same for our hospital visits.

If you have any questions or concerns, please, direct them to me or to Gary Koett.

Shalom.

Je Roelf, OP