

January 2017

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year Everyone!

The first year my husband Jon and I were married, I was ready to take the tree down the day after Christmas. I was not Catholic at that time and that was what I was accustomed to. Let me set the stage. Our 9' tree was decorated by my perfectionist spouse, using only **certain** decorations which included live grapevine and pine cones. Wait, did I mention the 1500 white lights that lit up the whole apartment when plugged in? I attended Mass regularly but I missed the part about how Christmas continues for days after the 25th. That was, until he not so gently, let me know that Christmas **wasn't over** in the Catholic Church. I guess somewhere along the line, I missed that one during Mass.

Fast forward many years later and the tree still has the same grapevine and pine cones (no longer alive) and I think we stopped at 500 lights this year. As for the perfectionist in our house, he is now relieved when our youngest son and I take over the decorating of the tree.

I chuckle to myself whenever think about that moment. Over the years, I have developed such a happiness and peace in my heart and mind, when I finally sit in the quiet of the living room (no longer an apartment) following all the busyness we work so hard to avoid during Advent.

These days after the 25th are a favorite time for me in our church year because it brings a calmness and beauty, a time to just be alone with Jesus and to be quiet. I **listen** best when I am **silent**.

If you look close enough LISTEN and SILENT have the exact same letters.

Reba Sommer
Diocese of Lansing
Safe Environment Coordinator
rsommer@dioceseoflansing.org
517-342-2551



VIRTUS Local Administrators

During the next few weeks, it is my hope to send a confidential survey to you to gather information; not by parish or school but as a whole Diocese.

If you wish to participate in the survey, that is up to you.

The series of questions will help me know how to serve your needs better. It will help me see what your struggles are and what training we should focus on this year. I will try to keep it to 10-15 questions that will take five minutes or less out of your day.

Would you be so kind as to complete it so I can put my best efforts in to helping you, your parish and your school.



Safe Environment Newsletter

tip As you complete ICHATS for volunteers, it is best practice to document the date and what type of background has been completed. The function is very easy. The screen can be found once you are in a users account. Here is the link for instructions and screen shots. This will help you keep track of who has been background checked and when the check was performed.

[http://www.dioceseoflansing.org/sites/default/files/files/VIRTUS%20Training%20PPP%](http://www.dioceseoflansing.org/sites/default/files/files/VIRTUS%20Training%20PPP%20)

tip If you have an employee who works the majority of time away from the parish or church (i.e. IT, Social Media employee) they still need to attend the VIRTUS live training session. Even though they are not physically on site, they are still considered an employee.

tip If you are looking for live sessions within the diocese the most current schedule is https://www.virtusonline.org/csa/report_SessionList.cfm. It is the most current because as soon as a Facilitator schedule's a live session it is posted on the VIRTUS website.

tip The question has come up, we have a Home School in our parish, are we required to have our Maintenance staff fingerprinted. The answer is No. The Home School community is not part of our Catholic Schools in the Diocese and therefore, the maintenance staff can not be fingerprinted under the Michigan State Police SE (School Employee) code. MSP requires a school code and there would be no school to associate them with in the Diocese.

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, affirms our deep commitment to creating a safe environment within our parishes and schools for children and youth. During 2017, a brief summary each month of what the seventeen Articles in the Charter means for us as a community, will be highlighted in our newsletter.

To Promote - Article 1

Dioceses are to reach out to victims/survivors and their families and show a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being. We do this as a church by offering healing and reconciliation. It does not matter if the abuse is in the past or current. The time frame does not make it any less important. Pastoral outreach is to promote healing by offering to meet with them, to listen, to be patient compassionate and express concern. Bishops are committed to work with pastors and deacons to nurture and encourage reconciliation among all people.

For a copy of the Charter go to http://www.dioceseoflansing.org/child_and_youth_protection under Resources and Information section.