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## **From the Clergy Associate for Family Ministries**

### **May Message from the Clergy Associate for Family Ministries**

“Spring is in the air, growing everywhere, spring is in the air!”

All of our daughters have learned to sing this song in nursery school, and so the words and catchy tune tend to stick in my head at this time of year.

This year the surge of energy that came with warmer weather, windows opening, dust clouds billowing as the cleaning frenzy took hold of me...all seemed more all-encompassing than I remember in past years. Perhaps because I have more energy for cleaning than I did a year ago with a new infant at home...perhaps because this past winter was particularly rugged.

Whatever the reason, the file boxes are being purged, the far reaches of our attic are being swept. I'm looking for space to free up...and as I engage in this therapeutic activity, my brain feels freer, more open to the possibility of imaginative play, creative engagement, and the like...

And I'm enjoying the trip down memory lane that perusing old files affords. Letters from dear mentors. Bulletins from ordination and wedding ceremonies, clippings and stories that mark episodes of transition, mile markers along the way to the present moment, tokens of all the dear souls that have guided me and served as vessels of God's love.

Our family has enjoyed a good bit of spring hiking on the weekends as well. Getting out into the mountains and chasing our spry daughters up rocky paths is invigorating...and also takes me back a few years to the days when I was the little girl dancing down mountain paths with my parents, sisters, and maternal grandmother. In my experience (from even before I could walk but only rode in a pack on my father's back), I have appreciated the liberation of walking in the woods.

There is something so freeing about a wooded stroll, listening to the sounds of nature around us and the noise our feet make on the organic matter of the path. For me, hiking is at least as freeing as spring cleaning...in each case, the greatest benefit is the time and space these activities afford for my busy and preoccupied mind to unwind.

Opportunities to reflect upon whence we come provide blessed opportunities for self-examination and, more importantly, for noticing the work of God in the ordinary activities of our lives. Retrospective provides depth for that awareness that can be missed in the moment.

Nevertheless, cultivating our awareness enables us to be more fully present to our blessings in the moment. Throughout Lent we engaged Centering Prayer as a powerful means to that end. There is something to be said for making silent space for God to speak. It behooves us to listen to the still, small voice of God within that sometimes gets overshadowed by the busy, noisy demands of our daily engagements. [See below for further opportunities to join us for Centering Prayer in the Garden Room on two more Wednesdays in May.]

Carving out time to sit still in silence and empty our minds of the bustle of the day such that God's voice has space and time to be heard helps us listen better to the needs of those around us throughout the rest of our week. And this mother of four is here to testify to the challenge of accomplishing such a feat as twenty minutes in silence, and the innumerable benefit procured from the same...

Jane Tomaine tells "A Story of Listening and Responding"<sup>1</sup> at the end of chapter 4 of her book, *St. Benedict's Toolbox*.<sup>2</sup> In her story Tomaine highlights the importance of sitting still **and** at the same time the importance of recognizing how much of life happens when we are interrupted from what we think we are supposed to be doing. I commend her book to you as one of two books that accompanied me through Lent.

The second was Graham Tomlin's book *Looking Through the Cross*. John Hartnett gave me a copy of Tomlin's book at the beginning of Lent. Tomlin, too, speaks of the power of silence and of listening<sup>3</sup>. Both Tomaine and Tomlin's books are well worth the read.

Tomlin also speaks of the Church as a nursery, and this caught my attention.

"If the Church is anything, it is intended as a nursery for the new humanity. Nurseries are places to which children are entrusted in order that they can grow in a safe and healthy environment into their full stature. They are not meant to just do child-minding; they are small communities of development and maturing. We use the same word 'nursery' for the place where plants are kept in greenhouses, until they are ready to be replanted in gardens. The whole idea is that of a space where people (and plants) can grow into their full potential and ripeness."<sup>4</sup>

Since I began with talk of nursery school, it seems appropriate to end with another reference to nurseries. What a blessing to serve with you all in this blessed nursery we know as St. Elizabeth's. Happy spring!

Faithfully,

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<sup>1</sup> Kindle Position 2010

<sup>2</sup> Beth Rauen Sciaino, a clergy colleague from Christ Church, shared Jane Tomaine's book with me.

<sup>3</sup> Tomlin, page 31

<sup>4</sup> Tomlin, page 189

Faithfully,  
Cathy Quinn  
*Clergy Associate for Family Ministries*