

## **The Privilege of Ministry**

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As Victims Assistance Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, I am privileged to minister to persons who have experienced sexual misconduct by a member of our Church. The spectrum of emotions I experience in my work ranges from great sadness to awe inspiring admiration for the persons who courageously share stories that they have held in secrecy and shame for many years. And what incredible healing journeys these survivors/thrivers have embarked upon! When a survivor of child sexual abuse shares the depth of gratitude they feel when listened to, believed, and validated, one realizes the privilege of serving in this ministry.

The ministry allows me to see the impact that the Safeguard the Children prevention training programs have on young persons. Youngsters are now trained to recognize potential grooming behaviors or actions that make them feel uncomfortable. They are encouraged to speak to a trusted adult about such matters and the adults are trained to listen and believe such reports. I have witnessed firsthand, the power and courage of their voices. What a change to society's old culture of silence and what a difference this will make in abuse prevention and healing.

Lastly, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is collaborating with leaders of other religious institutions, law enforcement, and child protection agencies regarding minor abuse and reporting. We participated in a conference with the Los Angeles City Attorney's office on child abuse identification, recognition and reporting by religious institutions. We have shared our reporting policies with the Interreligious Council of Southern California. There is a paradigm shift taking place. With education and awareness, we are making adults be more accountable and no longer silently empowering victimization. We must be our brothers and sisters keepers, even at the risk of exposing deficiencies in our communities.

Let this month of child abuse awareness remind all of us to become compassionate listeners and the eyes and ears that protect all of God's children. Take advantage of the training programs

available in your parish. You may make the difference in one child's life and what a difference it could make!