Parenting Group Offered To Clergy Abuse Victims

by Marie Elena Giossi

The diocesan Office of Victim Assistance is starting a new initiative to help survivors of clergy sexual abuse build stronger family relationships.

The parenting group for survivors in Brooklyn and Queens is set to begin on Jan. 28. Participants will meet weekly to share a meal and discussion, guided by trained mental health professionals.

The unique questions and concerns parents and survivor parents face in raising their children.

Jasmine Salazar, diocesan victim assistance coordinator, explained that this group is being offered in direct response to what a diocesan committee of survivors has requested.

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Salazar said her goal is to help attendees "gain confidence in their parenting and help them improve their relationship with their children."

Group members will be invited to try to better understand their experiences growing up, and any trauma related to parent-figures.

Salazar explained that one of the greatest challenges for parent-survivors is "being the same age as the parent was when the abuse took place.

In some cases, she noted, the parent "might become overprotective" in fear of the same thing happening to their child. Other parent-survivors push their own children away for fear that they might hurt them.

While research shows that abusers were victims of sexual abuse by a member of their family at an increased risk of becoming abusers later in life, Salazar points out that risk doesn't decrease with age.

By conducting this group, she hopes to help parent-survivors understand their fears.

Letters about this initiative have been sent to diocesan parishes and appeared in parish bulletins. Salazar has also reached out to victim assistance coordinators in dioceses across the country since "survivors often have friends in those parishes," she noted.

Registration for the group is open, and every potential participant is screened to ensure the confidentiality of the group. Interested parties may call 718-623-5236 for more information.

Another initiative planned for later this year is the formation of support groups for the survivors as well as their parents and spouses.

"There are different victims," Salazar noted, and her office works to help survivors and their families find reconciliation and healing.

Health Care Seminar for Clergy

Clergy, faith leaders, and those serving in professional ministries are invited to join featured speakers Kirk A. Bingaman, Ph.D., of Fordham University, and Father Michael Perry, pastor of Our Lady of Refuge parish, Flatbush, for a conference on "Tackling the Growing Health Crisis among Faith Leaders: Body, Mind, and Spirit" on Jan. 27, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., at Harbor Hill Senior Housing, 5613 2nd Ave., Brooklyn.

The program will present important information on spiritual care and behavior.