

Introductory Food for Thought for the Retreat

By Paula Marchman

Just a few teasers for the retreat

This gives an idea that I use storytelling, art and scripture to share with others in teaching and counseling. I hope to help them see the importance of taking time with their family to find the beauty and creativity of life that God has blessed us with in our Orthodox Christ-centered families. Taking time to view where we are presently, where we need to go and making adjustments in our journey.

Part of an Article called “Sacred Spaces” on Family Life Ministry

**When we think of connections in our life we gravitate to our relationships with others, our spouses, children, parents, friends, etc. If you stop to think about how you communicate with other people you will realize the importance of becoming aware of the connection you have with yourself and God who created you. When we are connected to our Creator first “Love God first with all your mind....”, and love others as you love yourself...we then can love others with a different perspective (a Christ focused viewpoint).

“My mother taught me at an early age to read stories out loud with expression, and to inflect my voice so that the words came alive in the telling of the story. She would laugh as I rolled quickly through all the words. She gently instructed me about the importance of the *spaces* between the words. “*Spaces* are important in understanding words and the message they tell, otherwise they are just alphabets strung together like Christmas lights”, she would say.

Musical notes dance on a music sheet but they express their melody also in the *rests*. The time that every instrument stops and quietness prevails can be key to the entire piece of music.

As important as spaces and rests are in stories and music they are profound even in our lives. Giving ourselves permission to slow down into the spaces of our lives to connect with God and our true selves requires humility and grace. Only the brave and broken are willing to be honest enough to journey beneath the fast paced surface of life to honor their connection to God and themselves. This may sound selfish but to truly love and accept another human being **we must be willing to look deep within ourselves to what makes us unique in God’s Kingdom so that we can also value the divine uniqueness in others.**

This is not an easy journey because in this self-discovery we find not only our strengths but our weakness, our mistakes and failures are there also. It is in this

brokenness, this struggle to find the truth that we transform, growing more compassionate, finding forgiveness and acceptance with the heart of Christ not only for others but also for ourselves. Realizing that perfectionistic expectations prove to be very harmful to our health, to the joy in our lives and even ripple to the way we connect with others. As Orthodox Christians we are blessed to be part of a sacramental church that lights our path on this journey and gives us the guides to help us.

The lifecycle of the caterpillar and butterfly is a metaphor for this journey. The silky caterpillar spins its chrysalis and for months in silence allows its natural transformation to take place, only to struggle for days on end to free itself. It is in this struggle that the wings gain their strength and size so that when freed she is transformed to a most beautiful butterfly. It is in the struggle that we grow and become more Christ-like.

Only then we can love with the patient selfless love so beautifully described in Saint Paul's letter to the Corinthians."

***Also I have podcasts on OCN and FLM called "Family Insights"
You can hear them *on myocn.net family insights*, they are 10-15 minute podcasts on subjects from the latest, "How do you Give and Receive Love", to "Family time isn't Screen time" to Post-Partum Depression and more.

Looking forward to seeing you next week-end God-willing, Paula