Tips for Responding to Questions/Concerns Regarding the Sexual Abuse Crisis

Empathetic Listening:

- Allow the other person to dominate the conversation and determine the topic discussed;
- Remain completely attentive to what the other person is saying
- Avoid interrupting, even when you have something important to add;
- Avoid coming to premature conclusions or offering solutions;
- Reflect back to the speaker what you heard them say.

Generic Responses:

I can hear that you are [insert emotion here] and I am sorry that you feel that way.

It sounds like you care very much for our Church/the victims.

Thank you for sharing your concern/question with me.

If an individual is in crisis:

Direct them to call 911.

If an adult individual discloses abuse that occurred when the individual was a minor:

Listen.

“Thank you for sharing your experience with me. The diocese has a Victim Assistance Coordinator who is available to speak with you and share more about our process. You can contact 1-877-887-9603.”

If an individual asks a question or has a concern about a specific case or priest:

“Thank you for your call, our Diocesan Safe Environment team is best suited to assist with your question. You can reach them at 1-877- 887-9603 or by email at PastoralResponse@richmonddiocese.org.

If an individual asks a question that appears on one of the FAQ documents or has a question about Diocesan response:

“If you were not aware, the Diocese has a list of FAQ’s available on the website. You can find them under the box titled Diocesan Response to the Abuse Crisis.”

If an individual asks a question you do not feel comfortable answering:

“I can tell that you care very much for our Church. With your permission I would like to share your contact information with someone who is best suited to respond. What would be the best way for them to reach you?”

Please email the individual’s name and contact information, and their question/concern to PastoralResponse@richmonddiocese.org.