

How Times Have Changed

By Sr. Nancy Kazik, OSF, Vice Chancellor

Published in April 2004 PEOPLE OF GOD

Some readers will recall sitting together with family, and listening to the radio. Yes, families sat together, listened and often talked about the program again and again as they anticipated episodes of Master Piece Theater, Blondie, or The Shadow! Others may recall President Franklin Roosevelt addressing the Nation. Families listening attentively to his “fire side chats.” Early radio programs were geared to families. The “large box” that people sat around now comes in all sizes and can be found in most any place, but programming is not generally arranged with families in mind. How times have changed!

The first TV’s were large with a small screen which often produced a “snowy” picture. In the early days of TV it took real concentration as the picture was a far cry from what is available today with new technology and high definition screens. Early on families sat together and watched the new phenomenon, television programming was family oriented. How times have changed!

Today, technology is ever expanding. It seems that almost everyone must have a radio, a cell phone, television, palm pilot, DVD, TV, computer . . . you name it! Messages are left on one of the technological devices. The family no longer sits together to listen and watch programs or to each other. How times have changed!

Children are often more adept at using the new technology than their parents. Their agile fingers send text messages on their cell phones. They spend hours at the computer sending e-mail messages. Adults too have become so “attached” to electronic devices that before the Sunday Liturgy we must be reminded to turn off cell phones, and other technological devices. How times have changed!

Children’s rooms today are filled with their own televisions, radios, a cell phone, pagers, a computer, etc. Who is minding the store? What are they watching, or listening to? With whom are they conversing? How many are involved in chat rooms? How many are making “contacts” via chat rooms? How many adults understand the “language” of chat rooms?

Congress recently was barraged with calls and letters after the infamous 2004 Super Bowl half- time show. It is now taking steps to review the kind of programming that is available. Some people call this censoring - others feel “big brother” is watching. Some radio personalities have already been silenced. Many TV programs during prime time are hardly “family programs.” Will the networks make the needed changes? Or will children and young people continue to be shown sex, violence, and lack of respect for the human person?

The Bishops were aware of the challenges that parents, children, and youth face. How can children be assured a safe environment when there is so much violence? In their

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Bishops direct that special training programs be provided to principals, teachers, catechists, and youth directors so that they in turn may present grade appropriate material to the children and youth in their care. Through these safe environment programs, children are taught that they are God's gifts, life is sacred and all persons are to be loved and respected. They learn that respect begins with each person respecting themselves and each other, this is seldom the message on TV. Children are taught ways to protect themselves, to know what is proper behavior, to know what abusive behavior is, how to avoid it, and how to report it, and how to "say no." These are lessons that must first be taught at home, and reinforced at school, Religious Education class, and youth groups. A good starting point at home could include supervising the use of TV, cell phones, computers etc.

Each one of us is faced with a challenge. We can make the world safer through the information that adults receive at the Archdiocesan Sexual Abuse Prevention Workshops; and children and youth receive at their safe environment sessions, and continued efforts at home and school. Are you ready to commit to this challenge? Together, we can create a better world for future generations.