

Our Lady of Peace
Listening Session on Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis
October 28, 2018
Summary of Responses

Facilitator: Sr. Terry Rickard, OP, RENEW International

Present: 70 parishioners; Fr. Bill Mahon, Pastor; Fr. Johan Betancourt, Parochial Vicar

1. What are the feelings I am experiencing as I reflect on the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report and the abuse committed by former Cardinal McCarrick?

Anger, frustration, disgust, sadness, betrayal, confusion, helplessness, hope, distrust of church leadership, compassion for victims, doubt, questioning, grateful to be at Our Lady of Peace, mistrust of the bishops, concern over homosexuality in the priesthood and hierarchy, confusion; shaken; felt personally betrayed by former Cardinal McCarrick since he was such a large figure in the Church in New Jersey.

2. How has the crisis affected my faith, prayer and my feelings about the Church?

- It hasn't, praying more
- praying for victims and priest abusers
- increased reliance on my faith
- I'm praying more because I feel my prayers are needed
- we stay in the Church because of Mary, the Eucharist, the community
- my faith is strengthened because I had to re-examine my beliefs; the Church is the people of God
- my overall relationship with God remains the same, but my relationship with the church has suffered
- my faith in God is strong but my faith in the Church is not
- the institution is sinful
- God is a verb and not a noun—that's who I believe in
- I'm experiencing doubt—why should I stay Roman Catholic?
- I do not hear these occurrences in other religions? Can I trust the clergy with my grandchildren?
- my mistrust is so deep I will not allow my children to be alone with clergy
- I do not go to confession—I confess directly to God and the sexual abuse crisis has deepened this belief
- "I see no reason to receive the sacrament of penance and confess to *supposedly* the representative of Jesus"
- the scandal has challenged me to explain to people why I stay in the Church—"Where else can we go? You have the words of eternal life."
- The scandal has not affected my relationship with Christ in the Eucharist, but I am distrustful of the Church beyond the parish level
- no impact—we are the Church, not the hierarchy
- it has not affected my faith except that I believe the Church is in grave danger
- saddened with the institution of the Church because it has not addressed these issues
- the Church is failing its members
- I have lost confidence in Church leaders
- I am worried to see friends and family leaving the Church**
- worried that we continue to lose people because this reinforces the belief that they can have God without the Church
- without drastic change and reform on all levels, we will continue to lose younger people**

What do you want to say to Cardinal Tobin? What actions do you want him to consider taking?

The Clergy:

- Investigate and disclose the names of all offending priests
- Remove clergy immediately if there is a credible claim of abuse
- Reinforce the priesthood as servant leaders and not princes
- Dismantle clericalism***
- Be careful about who you put in positions of authority; avoid people looking for position and rank—watch out for climbers
- Hold priests accountable for breaking the vow of chastity (homosexual and heterosexual activity)
- Allow celibacy as a choice
- Explore married clergy and women clergy
- Support female cardinals
- Bishops need to be included in zero tolerance policy

Role of the laity:

- More accountable to the laity***
- Structures that give the laity more decision-making power on all levels
- Lay review boards, both locally and globally, with 50 percent women***
- Need to develop lay review board to investigate bishops who abuse and cover up
- Need women in leadership positions on all levels***
- Include lay people (especially women) in the decisions to appoint pastors

Accountability, Transparency, and Policy:

- Provide full accountability***
- Provide full financial transparency—disclose the cost to the archdiocese of payouts***
- Give the victims just financial compensation and provide pastoral care to them
- Work to lift the statute of limitations**
- Need for ongoing vigilance—long-term process
- How will the Cardinal ensure that this will never happen again?

Former Cardinal McCarrick:

- Ask the pope to investigate and respond to the questions regarding former Cardinal McCarrick**
- Where is McCarrick in relationship to the Church—what is his status? How did he get promoted through the ranks?***
- Respond to Vigano accusations: what is true and what is not***

Communication:

- Communication plan to inform the faithful of the Cardinal's plans to root out sexual abuse because there is so much on social media, not sure what to believe
- Make the policy of zero tolerance as public as the statement of past wrongdoings
- Training for all archdiocesan priests on how to appropriately speak about and address the crisis in a pastoral manner that shows compassion for the victims
- Priests need help from the archdiocese to present a unified, consistent message
- All pastors need to disseminate the archdiocese's message in clear and consistent manner
- All Catholics must know what has happened and what will happen in the future: no more coverups, no more secrets, no more excuses
- A report on the current status of abuse in the Church since 2002*
- MAKE PUBLIC THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE BISHOPS AND PUNISHMENT FOR COVERING UP***

- Media blitz to let everyone in and outside the Church know what the is being done

Seminary Reform:

- Need to root out homosexual behavior and other illicit sexual activity**
- Make the seminary a safe place
- Some form of a seminarian advocate office where they can speak freely
- More women working and having decision-making roles in the seminary
- Lay people, especially women, vetting seminarians before ordination

What actions can we take at the parish level in response to the sexual abuse crisis?

- Include prayers of the faithful for victims**
- Weekly rosary for victims, priests, and seminarians
- Include diocesan policies and procedures in the bulletin*
- Communicate to the parish Cardinal’s responses to the sexual abuse scandal
- Continue listening sessions***
- Publish a parish policy responding to sexual abuse
- Invite the non-Catholic community to listening sessions so they can ask questions and be informed
- Designate donations for specific parish projects (we do not want to support diocesan payouts) ***

The “Word Cloud” below is a visual illustration of responses to question number 1.
The larger the font size, the greater the frequency of that word.

