

## **ST. MARK Brainstorming Session – Clergy Abuse Open Forum (follow-up to Listening Session from September 16, 2018)**

Sunday, October 21, 2018 from 4:30-6:00p

### **Issues/Problems/Questions/Action Steps**

#### 1) Lack of transparency of church; cover-up, culture of secrecy

Q: How can we promote transparency, reduce cover-up and transform the culture of secrecy in the church?

- a. Make records of priests engaging in sexual misconduct in diocese available
- b. Name St. Mark priests who have been accused of sexual misconduct – write letter to bishop that records be released. Don’t wait for summons from judicial system. Borrow from Archdiocese of Washington process.
- c. Stop impeding gov’t charges/criminal investigations - Regarding old child sex crimes, the Church must order every diocese and parish to stop impeding state legislative efforts to lift and extend time limits that block child victims of sex abuse crimes from pursuing criminal charges and civil lawsuits against their abusers.

The Church keeps extensive secret records and archives of all past accusations against clergy. Virginia State Attorney General subpoenaing sex abuse records of all Catholic Dioceses in Virginia and conducting a criminal investigation just as Pennsylvania did.

Absent that, the Arlington Diocese must initiate an outside review of actions taken by Bishop Keating and Loverde on reported sex abuse crimes during their tenure. Additionally, just as all 15 Catholic dioceses Texas have done, Bishop Burbidge should hire a team of former State and Federal law enforcement personnel, to review the personnel files of all Diocesan priests. The names of all clergy who have been “credibly accused” of sexual abuse shall be released to the public.

- d. Encourage Bishop Burbage to continue investigation – Send out notice of podcast on Arlington Diocese website - “Walk Humbly With God”
- e. Encourage Bishop to reveal ‘process’ of investigation:  
How are records kept?  
What is contained in records?  
How often are they reviewed and priests evaluated?  
How is it determined that the issues are resolved?  
When will Bishop Burbage announce updates on investigations?  
Have reports/actions taken by Bishop trickle down to parish with summary in bulletin.
- f. Greater decision-making by laity in congregation
- g. Quarterly report from USCCB re: \$ spend on treatment, attorney fees, credible accusations by diocese
- h. Withhold tithing

- 2) The crime itself – better understanding and explanation of how and why it happened –
  - a. Church needs to look at requirement that priests be celibate.
  - b. Look at historical reasons
  - c. Need to expand population of candidates to include women

- 3) Structure of church’s leadership or authority; clericalism (misuse or overextension of clergy’s authority)

Q: How can healthy accountability and healthy resolution for inappropriate behaviors by clergy be established?

- a. Stronger voice against wrong-doing, more clarity from pastor at St. Mark. Hear more from Fr. Pat about his feelings about what is happening.
- b. Parishioners challenge behaviors that are inappropriate
- c. Strength of vows for celibacy in question (heterosexual, homosexual, pedophilia)
- d. Women priests
- e. Denial of problems still existing
- f. Communicate with USCCB
- g. Pope remove many cardinals and/or bishops
- h. Treat priests like humans
- i. Hold priests accountable
- j. Culture changes: Change structure of decision-making to move priests; managing process for assigning, moving, reassigning
  - i. Form 5-member lay committee, representative of the people being served, to be involved in decision-making process for priest selection to specific parishes. Congregation feeds needs up the chain of command.
  - ii. Send request to bishop in spring prior to priest assignments being made with specific requests for needs to be met in new pastor/associates
  - iii. St. Mark lay committee interview priest prior to bishop approving candidates and assignments being made
  - iv. Identify and approve selection of priests for weekend fill-ins while other priest(s) on vacation
  - v. Review way weekday help-out priests are assigned to individual Masses.
  - vi. Annual performance evaluations prepared by each priest and reviewed by committee.
- k. Seminary changes incl better human psychological, spiritual and pastoral preparation – *The Washington Post* editorial from 10/18/18
  - i. Refocus from academic formation to forming emotionally mature, well-integrated priests personally and spiritually
  - ii. Strive for culture of trust, transparency, honest dialogue between seminarians and formation team – seminary ombudsman reporting independent of diocese and clear sexual harassment protocols
  - iii. Slow down rush to ordination. Have a minimum age for beginning seminary formation (college degree + work experience).
  - iv. Insure that ‘formator’ priests have skills for mentoring, role modeling and moral guidance.
  - v. Blue ribbon panel of seasoned seminary formators to evaluate seminaries based upon healthy criteria

- vi. Reduce the total number of seminaries to 15-20 regional institutions. 70 seminaries is too many with few seminarians enrolled.
  
- 4) Healing for clergy abuse-survivors and all church-goers
  - Q: How can we promote access, availability, affordability for healing?
    - a. Bishops holding hearing session in each parish
    - b. Guidance for handling allegations by children; children’s rights taught
    - c. Prayer and healing services
    - d. Discern Holy Spirit’s guidance
  - e. Church-sponsored healing workshop (incl 12-Step meetings) and services for those with addictions (alcohol, drug, sexual and/or pornography). Church needs to face, name and address real social/spiritual/psychological/emotional issues of 2018 acknowledging cultural changes of church, simultaneously, as reflective what is going on the world (i.e. human weaknesses affecting clergy)
  
- 5) Youth and adults leaving the church
  - Q: How do we determine why people are leaving the church and what can we do to address their concerns or complaints?
    - 1. Listen to youth
    - 2. We must engage in renewal at the individual family level; at large pastoral council members to visit a representative sample of non-engaged families to determine how St. Mark is or is not meeting their needs.

Various participants indicated an interest in joining a task group to work on actions items related to this meeting.