

Saint Andrew Parish

Listening Session on Clerical Criminal Sexual Abuse

March 7, 2019, 7:00pm

Please note that the comments here reflect a written record of what was spoken during the listening session. They were not filtered nor are they presented as the teaching of the Catholic Church or the response of its authorized teachers. We wanted all opinions to be openly voiced and shared, even when opinions of contrary points of view were shared.

Group # 1

Question #1

What is your reaction to the recent revelations of the abuse scandal in the Catholic Church?

There is a lot of shock and frustration over the length of time this has been going on. Why was Virtus training imposed on the laity when it didn't address the priest's criminal behavior and cover ups.

It is frustrating not knowing the actual % of priests and number of priests whom have had problems because of cover ups.

This is sinful.

We feel Cardinal Cupich has been compromised in his position. We don't trust him and have a lack of faith in him and in the pope.

We're concerned for employees of the Church. If they actually speak up and tell the leadership of the church are doing wrong, they'll lose their jobs.

The church has lost all of its moral authority.

The lack of communication is a problem. There needs to be better communication about what happened, what is being done, and what to do when abuse happens.

It is very difficult to speak to friends about being Catholic. It is an embarrassment to even be associated with the Church.

Question #2

What actions might the people of Saint Andrew suggest for change and reform within our Parish and the wider Church?

There should be married priests.

There should be women priests.

We should re-think mandatory celibacy.

Better communication needs to come from the parish and Archdiocese about what is being done for past abuse and preventing future. Also communicate how to report abuse.

Parish could provide access to a group that victims can talk to and receive comfort from other victims and other Catholics. Something they can approach safely and without judgement.

Any report should be handed over to the police

We need better psychological testing in seminary.

Anything criminal that is heard in confession should be reported.

There should be an advocacy group for victims formed of people who don't work for the Archdiocese.

Present data on the number of good priests that are out there as well.

Group # 2

Question #1

What is your reaction to the recent revelations of the abuse scandal in the Catholic Church?

It is difficult to hear what is going on in the news. Discussions make it difficult. Seems to be more and more.

I knew Fr. McCormick in Lawndale and knew him personally. This was very disappointing and made me very upset. Difficult to accept that the abuse happened.

It is understandable that a large institution such as the Catholic Church would have difficulties. The larger you become, the more difficulties you have.

I don't really understand what the Church is doing to correct it or how the church is addressing it. We need to stop it from happening in the future.

The gap between the faithful and hierarchy is wider than ever.

At first the Church just seemed to address the problem as a Public Relations problem rather than a real disaster. Hopeful that they are now serious about addressing it.

I want to know what I can do as a parishioner to make things better. It is easier to point the finger, but to be better informed helps me to better respond.

We don't think Church has done a good job of communication what it is doing next to make things better.

I don't feel the Church is serious about taking next steps and now we are finding out this problem is all over the world. Why didn't the Church do something about it.?

We are confused and angry

Question the pope's handling of the situation.

Everyone should feel comfortable around priests but unsure how we can anymore.

Working for the Church feels like I have a target on my back. I feel a lot of resentment and guilt.

I feel like I bear some of the responsibility for not knowing how to stop it.

I had to go through a background check and training, why haven't other people learned or been taught to recognize and prevent abuse?

The volunteer trainings to prevent abuse have been eye-opening. They were positive for me to learn how to prevent abuse. The experience for me of the Church has been a positive one. I am worried about the alienation of future generations and how they will lose out on the good experiences.

I feel implicated by association. People are more cautious now. I grew up with a sense of affection, it feels sad that we can't show affection anymore.

It is gut wrenching. The Penn report brought it to a whole new level because it was so graphic and shocking. How someone would use the sacraments and faith to fulfill their evil desires.

This is a tough time, I'm very worried about the future of the Church. Already seeing a decline in attendance. Younger generations already push back on religion and this just exacerbates this further.

I was really encouraged by all the young adults in the church on Ash Wednesday. That was unexpected. I hope it is not temporary.

Question #2

What actions might the people of Saint Andrew suggest for change and reform within our Parish and the wider Church?

Provide some positive press.

What comes from parishioners is more important than what comes from staff. Tell the story of all the good things happening. Best if others give character witness.

We need to tell each other the good things that every parishioner is doing and remind each other to do the good things.

We need to communicate to each other clear steps of what is going to happen. Concrete steps so that we can regain trust.

For faith and trust to be restored, people have to hear what is being corrected about the church.

Not knowing what is going on and what changes are taking place is what turns people off, it is hard to defend what we don't know.

Pray.

We need to use multiple media to get the message out. One source isn't hitting everyone, but we need to use social media, website, bulletin, ebuletin, etc.

People need to know what the punishment is for offenders so that it is known that abusers are not getting off easy or have come back into the system. There is some doubt about that now.

Create social outlet for priests. Get together with other priests, therapy, or something to help them cope with loneliness. Decrease vulnerability.

Homosexuality not accepted in the Church is problematic.

Group # 3

Question #1

What is your reaction to the recent revelations of the abuse scandal in the Catholic Church?

- We've been hearing it for so long that the shock is less as it just keeps going.
- The cover-up is a betrayal. The abuse is bad but we trust those in charge to do the right thing and fix it.
- By this time, we've almost become immune to it. It keeps getting worse and worse. McCarrick was a big shock.
- I'm personally bothered by the abuse, but there will always be challenges with human behavior. What bothers me more is the pervasive cover-up. The people that I trusted to protect us are making it worse. The abuse is terrible but the coverup is worse.
- The press coverage is unfair. Against the Catholic Church because it is a big target. The abuse has happened in other churches, but that isn't front-page news. It is always breaking news when there is a story about the Catholic Church, but other religions aren't so prominently featured.
- Statistics show that it happens everywhere – Tribune report about abuse in CPS schools – but the Attorney General created a hotline for abuse in the Church, but not in the schools or other places.
- We (the church) should be held to a higher standard.
- The issue is the coverup. The pew sitters are told to shut up and put money in the basket, and the bishops will just do whatever they want to do. It has caused tension of pew-sitters vs. clergy.
- Abuse must be investigated, reported, and taken care of.
- I don't want people to know that I'm Catholic because I'm ashamed. I feel like I should be defending my faith, but I struggle to do so. This is the first time in my life I've been embarrassed to be Catholic.
- More will come out. There will be more investigations. More people will be asked why they are part of the coverup.
- We've come to a better understanding of our church as global – crisis in America has been openly reported in a way that hasn't happened in many other parts of the world where there is a less open culture. More will come out. Is the Pope part of the coverup?
- A lot of the abuse cases are more than two decades old. There is a positive story about the Church and the 2002 rules better handling cases. But the AG makes it all seem current to get sensational coverage.
- More keeps coming out – greatly concerned about the recent story about abuse of nuns. This isn't just adult/child, it is about power and entitlement and being above punishment. More will come out because there are more abuses than the media has covered.
- There is so much corruption in the church. It is the Blago approach – so much corruption but at a level that we tolerate, but then you go too far and you get made an example. Look at McCarrick.
- Questions: Who knew? Who turned their back on the reports?
- This is basic sexual harassment. It stinks, and the stink is still there in the church.
- There are more guidelines in society these days about what is inappropriate and how to deal with it. More people are aware of what is acceptable behavior. In the old days, we

didn't classify all of this in an "abuse" bucket. Hard to use our culture now to judge the past. Maybe this is just an excuse, though. There was an abusive culture in place.

Question #2

What actions might the people of Saint Andrew suggest for change and reform within our Parish and the wider Church?

- I don't have much belief that there will be any change.
- There is a lot of apathy among the people in the church – we (the laity) are not partners in the solution.
- I'm sad because we're not included in the discussions or the solutions. We're the church.
- The expectation is that what the priest says, we do. Don't want our ideas as part of the solution.
- There is a complete loss of trust in authority. The loss of trust is because of a lack of transparency. The current activity doesn't feel like an authentic desire for change.
- VIRTUS training can really help prevent or at least open people's minds. Can it be expanded to everyone?
- VIRTUS needs to be consistently applied. Some churches/schools don't enforce it.
- This question is almost too big to deal with. The church is really bad in behavior, but I still stick it out
- In my mind, the Vatican equals corruption.
- Transparency is a place to begin. Much of what we are seeing is because people hid things. I think we can start open communication and transparency. Church leaders need to promote openness and transparency.
- Here at St. Andrew, we're starting down that path. We are being more open. That's something we can do here in this parish.
- The current model of leadership and people must change. There is a gulf between the two. How do we narrow that gap? We need to humanize the relationship between leadership and the people.
- This sounds like a "movement" which will never happen. What is the first step?
- Embedded in this crisis is a subtext about homosexuality. We need to make this more transparent. Everyone knows that we have gay priests, just like there are gay people in society. It isn't a surprise. Yet we keep that secret behind closed doors – it is no wonder that sexuality is such a problem in the church.
- We should not allow special considerations for LGBT people. All are equal – no special treatment for LGBT.
- The desire for power is everywhere. Grasping at power, backstabbing others – it is human nature.
- We need to encourage people to participate more. We should have more people here at this listening session. People need to be involved in more than Mass.