



St. Gabriel Catholic Church

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March 15, 2019

Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis
Bishop, Diocese of Charlotte
1123 S. Church Street
Charlotte, NC 28203

Dear Bishop Jugis,

Greetings and Peace!

As pastor of St. Gabriel Church, I would like to share with you how we have found hope in the midst of the Sexual Abuse Crisis in the Church. As an outgrowth of our JustFaith program parishioners have been meeting to discuss how to best respond to this crisis. They have done considerable research on the topic of sexual abuse, approaches to healing, structures of governance in the Church along with exploring ways to gather others for healing. This parish group has organized and named themselves 'WATCH' - We Are The Church. With their encouragement, we held two Listening and Prayer sessions bringing together a hundred parishioners. We gathered in our church with the hope of creating a safe place for listening and prayer. We were blessed with participants who were very open and respectful with many expressing feelings, thoughts and suggestions related to the abuse crisis. All expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to speak and be listened to under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Many expressed a strong desire to continue the dialogue along with an enhanced commitment to understand the past and assisting the church towards a more holy tomorrow. At the request of our WATCH group I have attached a summary of our Listening and Prayer sessions.

In sharing our experience, it is hoped that we can assist in finding a way for rebuilding the trust that has been lost in the Church.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,



Reverend Francis J. O'Rourke
Pastor

Encl.

Copy : Most Reverend. Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
Most Reverend Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio of the USA.
Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta

ST. GABRIEL
LISTENING AND PRAYER SESSIONS
ABUSE WITHIN THE CHURCH
January 30 and 31, 2019

The following are comments made at the Listening and Prayer sessions including those received in writing.

- There are two main reasons for abuse of minors, adults and the vulnerable in the church. One involves the natural tendency for companionship, love and sex. The other involves the natural tendency for power and domination.
- The use of power to gain domination is prevalent in the church. When there are no checks and balances within a society power can easily be used wrongly. There are few, almost no, checks today on the actions of any member of the clergy or the hierarchy. This environment allows for wrong, even immoral, actions. The church needs to develop stronger internal monitoring and management and allow for competent third-party involvement, i.e. Laity and secular.
- To be here 17 years after Boston is a MASSIVE FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP! This is NOT a problem with priests, but rather a problem with Bishops, Cardinals and the Pope.
- The culture of the hierarchy is too accustomed to ask a penitent to repent, and then believing him and forgiving him, even with multiple credible evidence otherwise. And then passing the abuser off to another parish, diocese, even another country, or to some home for questionable treatment. Try to explain that rationale to the victims and their families.
- The abuse and the cover-up is greatest problem in the church since the Reformation
- What has been the effect of this on our youth? How do we recover?
- Is the manner in which the church operates today, God's way? God's way is to shepherd each and every one of us.
- The abuse issue is not just against minors. It is also against adults and the vulnerable for whatever reason
- Why is the Vatican Abuse Department only labeled to protect minors?
- It is unforgiveable that the hierarchy has hidden and continues to try to hide this problem

- We need both church and secular administrative checks and balances. Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely
- Most people are afraid to speak to Bishops, we have put them on a pedestal, which is a large part of the problem. Is our Bishop a pastor or what? He needs to care for and shepherd his people, especially the victims. I don't need to hear his spokesman. Why isn't he making the rounds of his parishes?
- The church is not just the hierarchy, but all of us, the people of God
- Healing and action must start at each individual church, with a bottom up approach, not rely on and wait for the hierarchy
- Change in the church is glacial, even when we are in flames
- The church needs to change its culture, not just add more rules and regulations. But many new protocols are needed, directed and monitored from the top down. Subjects of further "guidance" must include: hierarchical expectations, reporting, transparency, and cooperation with secular jurisprudence, seminary formations, transfers, dismissal, etc.
- I do not think celibacy is the main cause of the problem, but it does give those with homosexual tendencies a "safe haven" in which to exist
- I've never heard about an accused priest going to jail
- There has been a cry out to all the Bishops to name the names
- Should have taken care of this issue 30 years ago
- There were some hurtful messages, related to the victims, from the spokesperson for the Bishop
- People in any leadership believe they can do anything – POWER RULES
- I have been a Catholic all my life and for the last year I have been embarrassed to be a Catholic
- Teachers have been required to call 911 for suspected cases since 1973
- Priests and the hierarchy are not coming forward. They are in hiding

- I've never seen our Bishop say a single sentence about the abuse in the church
- It is unforgiveable that many of the hierarchy have hidden and continue to try to hide this problem
- There has to be a no tolerance policy, with teeth
- The clergy and all should be subject to church and civil laws and appropriate punishment by both
- I have not attended church during this crisis, it has been a long time!
- The church, as individuals and as an institution, must be held accountable
- Need more women involved, actively
- What is it that the laity can do? We can write letters? We can cut off financial support? I can't leave the church, this is where the Eucharist is!
- There are other Christian churches that I could look at, and not leave my faith in Jesus
- The only way I can meaningfully express my voice is to withhold contributions to the failed diocesan structure and contribute directly to worthy causes
- I'm staying! I need to be more active
- I will not be giving to the DSA this year, why?--he won't release the names of the credibly accused
- We are the church. I am the Church. The Church belongs to me.
- Actions speak louder than words. We must act, not just pray
- We need to have a Mass of Reparations. Monthly prayer groups
- Too much power with a lack of accountability
- Celibacy should not be a requirement for priests, but an option – similar to the Orthodox ideal.
- Women should be in the clergy on an equal basis with men

- There can be no more hiding and attempting to "protect the Church" or individual priests. What about the victims? We are embarrassed that of all the dioceses nationwide our diocese (Charlotte) seems to stand out for lack of transparency
- Where is our Archbishop?
- The church is not just the hierarchy, but all of us-- including the ordained, the religious, and most importantly, the laity.
- Love each and every one of us as thy neighbor, not some more than others.
- I have no problem with homosexual priests as long as they are celibate. They can be the best of the best. Homosexuality is an accident of biology which can't be changed, but which can be managed.
- Help the victims and their families and all involved
- The cover up, in many ways, is the worse crime. The real scandal
- How can a cardinal receive a major appointment in the Vatican, be considered a punishment?
- Many in the hierarchy should resign
- Hard to be catholic
- The Pope needs to lead
- All Bishops need to have Listening and Prayer sessions in their parishes
- I question whether the hierarchy can be relied on to do what is right
- The church is losing its moral authority, and many in the hierarchy don't see it
- Is the church going to take as long with the abuse issue as it did with slavery?
- Abuse and its cover-up is a crime in the eyes of God and in the secular society. Duty to report to both
- Lack of consequences, lack of urgency
- Too many do not understand the full meaning of God's message to his people

- I'm tired of the hypocrisy and the feeling of betrayal
- We, the people, are entitled to answers
- We need to prepare a petition and send it to the Bishop, Archbishop, USCCB, Nuncio, etc.
- We have done a better job of screening and understanding the motivation and psychology of seminarian's attraction to the priesthood over the last few years. I believe that those that can maintain their vows of celibacy should be allowed to proceed to ordination. They are also children of God and are homosexual only by accident of biology. God bless them also; let them serve.
- There has been a massive failure of leadership
- The church also needs to be recognized for all the good that it does
- The people of God, the Laity, need to rescue the church
- God bless our pastor, one of the very best
- God bless the people, and the church. May the Holy Spirit guide and protect all of us.