

## Fertilizer and Flowers

Fr. Wally soon celebrates fifty years of priesthood. Deacon Andy will be ordained a priest this month. In the midst of the hurt of the abuse and cover up scandal we see signs of fidelity through trial and new life. During our conversation on February 25, we faced this difficult topic. One parishioner shared that while she has been away from the Church this conversation has brought her home. Others shared that simply by facing the ugly reality together, the feelings of being alone and overwhelmed began to lessen.

The conversation we had helped us to realize that we are not alone. Personally, we need to purify our lives and seek sainthood more intentionally. As a community, we are in conversation with several parishioners looking at effective ways of moving forward. While the way forward is not yet clear, we know the need and are facing it together as a community.

As we continue to walk the Way of Jesus, which is the Way of the Cross, let us keep the insight of Admiral Stockdale, a “guest” of Hotel Hanoi, in mind:

*“This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end - which you can never afford to lose - with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.”*

Three items were the focus of that conversation:

1. Thoughts and Feelings - We want to hear your feelings about the crisis.
2. Factors and Causes - How did we get here? What’s at the root of the crisis?
3. Ideas and Actions - What is the truth of what we can do? How do we move forward?

Below is a small selection of some of our people’s comments.

### **Thoughts and Feelings**

Knowing about this crisis and either doing nothing or worse, covering it up, is very poor leadership on the part of the bishops. They failed in their roles as Shepherds of the laity.

It makes you question the faith and hierarchy of the Church. Doubt creeps in. Makes you feel all mixed up inside.

Victims are scarred for life along with their families. The perpetrators must be held accountable for breaking the law.

The timeframe of the recent abuse was troubling. Has there really been such a dramatic drop-off in abuse in the last fifteen years?

We are many parts, but still one body. The Eucharist is the only thing that fills me up.

It is mind-boggling that learned men could orchestrate such a long-term and systemic cover up. How?! Is celibacy to blame? How do we talk to our children about this? We must tell them to never be alone with a priest!

The scandal embarrasses us and damages our reputation and ability to evangelize.

### **Factors and Causes**

The cover-up killed us. The hierarchy simply cannot be self-policing.

The Cleveland Diocese has a lay review board with a non-voting priest as an observer to investigate accusations of abuse.

What happens from here? What are you going to do with our comments and information?

Do priests have counselors for psychological healing and addiction help available to them? (Yes.)

### **Ideas and Action**

More conversations like tonight’s will be helpful.

Bring everything into the light.

The hierarchy of the Church should issue a massive “mea culpa” to its beloved members and enlist their help to police the bishops going forward.

Transparency! Sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Work with the five groups involved to pursue healing, justice, and prevention - seminarians, perpetrators, priests, victims, congregations - and partner with other parishes to continue both the conversation and action.

In canon law the punishment is isolation in a monastery to spend the rest of a priest’s life in prayer and penance. What about the civil law?

There needs to be more direct preaching from the pulpit on this crisis and other huge cultural issues where the Church’s Truth is so desperately needed in our culture right now like abortion and gay marriage.

More frank, open, and transparent conversations.

FAQ about the crisis and the response of both the bishops and the Vatican.