



St. Louise Parish

141 156th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98007
(425) 747-4450

October 17, 2018

The Most Reverend J. Peter Sartain
Archbishop of Seattle
710- 9th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Subject: St. Louise Parishioners Responses to the Sexual Abuse Crisis

Dear Archbishop Sartain,

We, the undersigned, are writing on behalf of the parishioners of St. Louise Parish, in Bellevue WA. Our letter is in response to the sexual abuse crisis associated with the allegations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, dated July 27, 2018, and the accusations against Pope Francis by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò.

The St. Louise Adult Faith Formation Committee hosted a Listening Session on October 3, 2018, with the Parish community. Approximately 50 parishioners attended the event. Grouped at tables, parishioners discussed and then wrote out responses to three questions. A summary of the responses to these questions is offered, in charity and truth, as a way to collaboratively participate with the Church in solving this crisis. A summary of the responses to each question is as follows:

1. What has weighed on you the most at this time? (See Attachment 1 for detailed responses)

Generally, the St Louise parishioners in attendance at the Listening Session were most bothered by the lifelong pain of the victims and the associated secrecy, complicity and cover up of sexual abuse by priests and bishops. As a result, the attending parishioners were overwhelmed by the scope and size of the crisis in both the U.S. and abroad. All of this was seen as an abuse of power by the Church hierarchy, who have suffered a significant loss of moral authority and trust by the lay faithful.

Our parishioners in attendance were also bothered by the lack of understanding by the hierarchy of the damage done to children and the belief that reassigning priests to give them a fresh start would solve the problem. Parishioners also cited the lack of leadership and willingness by the hierarchy to "own the problem," perform a root cause analysis and take concrete steps towards solving the problem.

Finally, the attending parishioners grieved for the family and friends who have abandoned the Church due to this crisis. They mentioned that they were most concerned about the youth and young adults leaving the Church and not coming back. Parishioners were also struggling with their own shame and embarrassment about the crisis and the constant wondering "how long before I, too, give up and leave."

2. What ideas do you have to help solve the problem of governance in our Church? (See Attachment 2 for detailed responses)

St. Louise parishioners in attendance at the Listening Session advocated most strongly for transparency and accountability, at all levels of the Church, as the best way to move forward. The recommendations include having professionally trained men and women counselors on review boards and outside investigations of allegations and claims against clergy and lay staff. Other ideas include funding a root-cause analysis of the problem, and working at all levels to eliminate clericalism. A structure must also be put in place that makes the highest levels of

Church officials responsible and accountable with serious, real consequences. A study should also be funded of other institutions that have successfully recreated themselves, when the structure was a significant piece of the problem.

Since the attending parishioners identified the abuse of power as the leading cause of the crisis, there was strong support for shared decision-making between clergy and lay people (married and single, men and women, consecrated and not), and qualified lay involvement, especially women, at all levels of the Church. Parishioners also felt that the Safe Environments program needs to address the role and responsibilities of the Bishop. Seminarian training systems should be reviewed and seminarians vetted and screened to identify problems before they become ordained. If not already done, seminarians and priests should be required to have annual and on-going psychological counselling to ensure their mental fitness for their work.

Finally, and most frequently expressed by attending parishioners was the comment for mandatory celibacy to be ended and priests to have the ability to get married. The view was that marriage should be a choice and may possibly help with the priest shortage. Also, while the attending parishioners also understood that current Church teaching does not support it, they were supportive of allowing women to become ordained priests and for women to have strong roles in Church governance, at all levels of the Church.

3. How do we better involve the people of God in this process? (See Attachment 3 for detailed responses)

The parishioners in attendance at the Listening Session identified a need for an Independent Commission of qualified laymen and laywomen to study the Church crisis. The study should be nationwide, to get it all out in the open, with no more dripping of terrible news. Individual reports, by State or by Diocese, will ultimately be "death by a thousand cuts" for the Church in the United States.

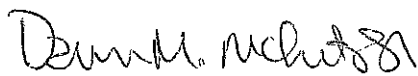
Another idea that the attending parishioner identified was that the Church should fully implement the Vatican II model of a horizontal, lay-led Church, with the priest serving the Church and the people. The Church, with lay support, should develop a comprehensive plan of involvement for laypeople and then follow the plan. The Church should also allow laypeople, with term limits, to serve on Church commissions that oversee and advise clergy. If not already occurring, the Church should consider allowing qualified lay people to run the parish administrative and operational functions so as to allow the priest to focus on his priestly ministry. This lay-led, horizontal structure will require two elements including consultative as well as authoritative bodies to be successfully implemented.

Finally, the parishioners attending the Listening Session felt that the Church must be open and transparent in their decision making process and keep people informed, as new information becomes available. The Church should also consider ending mandatory celibacy and allowing women priests and opening the Church to greater roles for women and open all non-sacramental roles to the laity. The Church needs to be open to the gifts of everybody; ordained/laity, male/female, straight/gay, young/old, healthy/vulnerable, etc.

In conclusion, the responses from our parishioners attending the Listening Session indicate that the Church hierarchy needs to demonstrate that they are listening, willing to allow lay involvement, and to accept change. Increased openness and communications between the clergy and the laypeople will be essential to rebuilding trust and moral authority. Bishops and priests need to be more visible in this process to attract talented, professional laypeople, who can help rebuild and restore the Church in the eyes of the world

Our St. Louise parishioners deeply and profoundly recognize that resolution of this crisis will be a long journey for our beloved Church. To that end, St. Louise will be holding a 24-Hour Prayer Vigil on First Friday, November 2, to First Saturday, November 3, in commemoration of the victims of sexual abuse. This vigil is also being held in advance of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Conference scheduled for November 12-14, 2018, to pray for the success of the Conference and for the Holy Spirit to guide the USCCB during their time together. We truly believe that the Holy Spirit will lead us on an interesting road into the future. We pray for the courage and grace to follow where this journey will lead us.

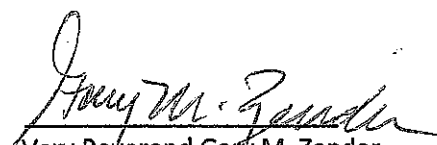
Respectfully yours in Christ,



Dawn M. McIntosh
Adult Faith Formation Chair



Lara Kammareck
Pastoral Council Chair



Very Reverend Gary M. Zender
Pastor of St. Louise Parish