



SAINT THOMAS MORE
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Summary of Private Prayer Cards in Response to Clergy Abuse Scandal

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with our healing Mass on September 20, 2018, through the end of Lent, parishioners shared their prayer and reflections in response to the clergy sex abuse scandal.

Two hundred twenty-five (225) parishioners shared responses to three questions:

1. How am I feeling and what have I been thinking in the wake of these deeply disturbing revelations in the life of the Church?
2. What are my hopes and desires for us as Church going forward – lay people, religious, priests, bishops – the Body of Christ in our world?
3. How do I stay centered and find hope in the midst of the paschal mystery which we are all experiencing?

Three parishioners and one staff person gathered on three occasions to read each card out loud. Each reading session started with a prayer. The purpose was to listen and strive to develop an accurate summary of the prayers. The readers were committed to honoring the reflections and maintaining confidentiality. They produced the summary below. These reflections are not intended to be recommendations or endorsements. Rather, the statement is the best effort to capture the collective message and spirit of the 225 parishioners who wrote their reflections on prayer cards. This summary was presented to Archbishop Hebda on July 15, 2019.

All the cards were burned during a ceremony immediately before the Easter vigil this past April.

SUMMARY

Many of the responses to the question of how people are feeling regarding the clergy abuse crisis were repeated over and over again. People are feeling profound sadness, hopelessness, despair, disappointment and anger, fear, a loss of trust, heartbroken, betrayal, embarrassment, hurt and confusion. They feel that the Church is hypocritical; the Gospel message has been compromised in order to protect power. People are rightly concerned for the children and youth of the Church. They want to be able to defend their faith but feel shame in doing so. They are shocked that the abuse and cover up has gone on for so long and in so many places. They fear that people within the Church are not listening to God.

- There is a demand for accountability and recognition of sin, transparency and honesty from the hierarchy. People want to see an action plan to prevent further abuse. They want to see institutional change and reform. They want to see less clericalism and more servant leadership among the clergy.

- They want their bishops and priests to care about people, not power, and to live the Gospel message which they are called to preach.
- A large percentage of people want to see more laity, particularly women in leadership roles, as well as the possibility of married and women priests. They desire a Church that is defined by God, not men. Many have called for a more inclusive Church and, in particular, have said women's voices must be heard.
- It was evident from the response cards that many of the people at St. Thomas More put their faith and trust in God and not the institutional Church. However, many respondents remain hopeful for reform and renewal of the Church, yet they feel Christ must be at the center. Christ should be our guiding light.
- Our parishioners are staying centered by prayer: prayer for victims, that they may heal and live better lives; prayer for those who have left the Church; that they may return one day and become a source of strength; prayer for the perpetrators and for the ability to forgive them; and prayer for Pope Francis and Church leaders, that they may lead by following the example of Jesus. Our community is staying centered by trying to live the Gospel message of love, and by receiving the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. People are staying centered by focusing on God's spirit and the good of the Church rather than the failings of its leaders.
- There is a strong desire for unity within our community, and many stated that as the Body of Christ we need to come together in love to change the Church.

