

Fall Listening Sessions Summary of Feedback

On September 13, 2018, Bishop Patrick J. McGrath announced a series of listening sessions to hear from those who have been victimized as children by clerical sexual abuse either directly or in their families and to seek input from people in the pews on the pathway to reform and healing actions.

Bishop McGrath was joined at the sessions by Coadjutor Bishop Oscar Cantú, Anthony Gonzalez, Director of the Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (OPCVA), and Griselda Cervantez, Victim Assistance Coordinator and Prevention Advocate.

The dates and locations of these sessions were:

- Saturday, September 22 Our Lady of the Rosary Hall in Palo Alto
- Tuesday, October 2 Most Holy Trinity Parish in San Jose
- Friday, October 12 Saint Martin of Tours Parish in San Jose
- Wednesday, October 17 Santa Teresa Parish in San Jose

It is estimated that 300 people attended across all sessions. The sessions, each of which lasted approximately two hours, began with a brief opening statement from Bishop McGrath. Then the floor was opened for all present to come to the microphone and to ask questions and/or share their thoughts with the Bishop and all present.

Rosemary Ellmer, MDiv, Ph.D. was asked to facilitate four Listening Sessions and take notes of each session and to provide an overall summary. Ellmer wrote that, in reviewing her notes of all four sessions, it was clear that there was much overlap in issues that were brought forward at each session. Her summary was presented according to 10 thematic categories of feedback that were evident across all sessions. These categories are based on the specific statements of the participants.

Listed below are the ten general categories of feedback:

- I. The painful experiences of victims and their families
- II. The lack of trust and faith in the institutional Church
- III. The need for reform of the clerical culture in the Church
- IV. The need for reform in the selection, training, and monitoring of clergy
- V. The need for on-going behaviors that demonstrate contrition and behavioral change by the church and concern for victims and families
- VI. The need for reform in the role of the laity in the Church
- VII. The need for reform in the treatment of women in the Church

- VIII. Concern for the future of the Church
- IX. Other future actions desired by the laity
- X. Concern about the handling of reports of abuse at Presentation High School

These listening sessions were part of ongoing actions the Diocese of San Jose has taken to support healing and accountability and to improve upon the vigilance, training, and prevention efforts. On October 18, 2019, the Bishop released the list of clerics with credible allegations and expressed his deepest apologies for the actions of those who were in positions of authority and who violated that sacred trust by abusing children.

Throughout the fall and winter, Kinsale Management Consulting. Dr. McChesney and her team from Kinsale Management Consulting. completed an in-depth independent review of the personnel files pertaining to the sexual abuse of children committed by any cleric appointed by the Bishop of San Jose or, in the years before our founding in 1981, by the Archbishop of San Francisco.

In April, the Diocese of San Jose will update its Clergy Abuse Disclosure List as the result of the information received from Kinsale's review of personnel files and recent disclosures by other arch/dioceses and religious orders.

Bishop McGrath and Bishop Cantú are continuing to look into ways to improve the health and well-being of our clerics; along with ways for clerics to become more transparent and accountable for their misconduct.

The Bishops have encouraged other victims/survivors to come forward. Anyone who has been a victim of sexual abuse by anyone working on behalf of the Church is urged to contact civil authorities (police department or sheriff's office) and then to contact the Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults at (408) 983-0113 or opcva.ethicspoint.com.