

Four Courageous Conversations

Responding to the Catholic Church Clergy Sex Abuse Crisis

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.”

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican, Dec. 7, 1965

We are here together to face the recent and ongoing revelations of the clergy sex abuse crisis. You are welcome here. Whatever your thoughts and feelings, they are welcome here too. This conversation invites you to reflect and articulate your thoughts and feelings, and to hear those of one another without judgment. We aren't here to solve or resolve anything. We are here to reflect, listen, speak, and pray and be in this moment together, and to face it together as Jesus prayed, “so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you...” (Jn. 17:21)

Participant Ground Rules

1. **Be Here Now** – Give full attention to each other as you pay attention to the movements of your heart and listen for the Spirit of God.
2. **Listen for Understanding** – Take to heart what's expressed by others, and thoughtfully consider and express what you want to say.
3. **One at a Time** – One person speaks and everyone else gives the gift of listening without judgment.
4. **Everyone Speaks Once before Anyone Speaks Again** – If you wish, you may choose to pass with the opportunity to speak later.
5. **Speak Your Truth and Let Others Speak Theirs** – Say “I am, feel, think, need to, etc.” instead of “They are, think, feel, need to, etc.” There will be no discussion, feedback, or comments after each person speaks. There will be moments of silence in the conversation for people to digest what has been expressed and how it relates to their own thoughts and feelings.

Facilitator & Recorder Roles

The role of our facilitators is to assist in opening up and guiding the conversations. Kindly follow their instructions. There will be a person taking notes so there's a record of these important conversations. The notes will be anonymous. The content will be recorded, not who said it.

Courageous Conversations

+ Conversation #1: What are your feelings re the Catholic Church Clergy Sex Abuse Crisis?

The sharing of responses by all group members will be followed by three minutes of silence for each person to reflect on what they heard from others and how it affected their own thoughts and feelings. Then each person will be invited to respond to the sentence stem, “**As I listened, what I heard was...**” and responses will be recorded anonymously.

+ Courageous Conversation #2: What are the two or three most important factors that you identify as the root causes of the Catholic Church Clergy Sex Abuse Crisis?

The sharing of responses will be recorded anonymously.

+ Courageous Conversation #3: What are the two or three most important things that you want church leadership (any level – you may name the roles or levels in your comments if you wish) to be aware of as they and we consider how to respond to the Catholic Church Clergy Sex Abuse Crisis?

The sharing of responses will be recorded anonymously.

+ Courageous Conversation #4: “All of this says to me that...”

The sharing of responses will be recorded anonymously.

+ Conclude with Gratitude: “I am grateful that I was here in this conversation because...” – OR – “One gift I received in this conversation is...”

The sharing of responses will be recorded anonymously.

Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith,
be courageous, be strong.

Your every act should be done with love.

1 Cor. 16:13-1