



TOWN HALL held 9-25 & 27-2018 in St. Catherine of Alexandria

On September 25, 2018, a town hall was held in English at the parish hall at St. Catherine of Alexandria. Apx. 90 people including 2 members of the deaf community with interpreters for the deaf were present. Spanish language town hall was held at the same location on September 27, 2018 with 15 participants. Both town halls followed the same format.

Fr. Gene Sabio, pastor opened the town hall with prayer (English) and Fr. Jun Canjucom (Spanish).

Moderators Mary Swanson (English) and Patty Lopez (Spanish) explained the planned format for the evening to attendees. Emphasis was made that this is respectful active listening, no debate or arguments but respect for all to speak freely.

Moderator then reviewed the events occurring over the last few weeks that have led to the crises in the church and why the town hall was held. Issues briefly reviewed included McCarrick/Pennsylvania grand jury report and Vigano letter.

Attendees then were asked to break into groups of suggested 6 people (but were told they could be smaller or larger if they chose). Groups ranged from 3-10 people. Single sheet of 4 questions were provided to each group and they were asked to select a spokesperson who would give a 3 minute summary following their discussion. Questions were:

Identify and express your personal feelings:

1. *What feelings have you been experiencing since hearing the news?*
2. *What are you angry about? What are you worried about or fear most?*

Share your personal reflections:

1. *How has your commitment to the mission of the church been impacted?*
2. *How has the current situation affected others in your ministries and/or families?*

Group discussion was 30 minutes. Groups were reminded when ½ time was over so that all would have the opportunity to speak. Then at 5 minutes another warning to please

begin wrapping up. Each group spokesperson then summarized. Points made were as follows:

- Thought it was all over...Sad, Angry, Ashamed, Disappointed, Betrayed, Embarrassed, Demoralized
- Not again! Leaders still want to protect and hide it. Leadership seems paralyzed
- We owe love and support to the victims
- Want direction from our church, from the Pope. He needs to speak up
- Leaders should have seen this coming
- Leaders should be held accountable. Stop lying to us
- Transparency should have been happening. We need it now up to the Vatican
- Priests should go straight to jail for their actions
- Worried younger generation will walk away and we will have an empty church
- Afraid we will all be judged by the actions of a few who are evil. People on the fence will stay away. The faithful will not leave
- We want to hear what we are doing as a church
- We are not children, we need to fix it! The perpetrators and the Bishops
- Bishop Barnes is right, he does not present the church as a victim, he has been up front
- What about background checks? Why aren't these people caught in advance?
- Angry about the children affected and the cover up.
- Should we allow priests to marry? Will that help?
- My husband stopped coming to church. I feel I've lost my home
- They made a commitment to serve us, this can't be happening
- Their job is to bring us to conversion, not to be sinful
- Being in a position of catechesis, am I going to be under scrutiny? I share the faith, am I now its defender?
- People generalize us all, we are already losing the youth, this will make it worse
- We feel the need to be doing more, more outward signs of living our faith
- Families are already having lots of issues. The erosion of trust in our clergy and hierarchy is making it more difficult to bring "lapsed" family members back to the faith
- This can happen anywhere, like police, doctors, boy scouts but angry about how the Bishops handled the situation
- Trust has been shaken because of the Pope on down
- Questioning the process of becoming a priest
- The crisis is an obstacle to evangelization
- Have to explain to people why I still come to church
- Want justice for the victims. Letters of apology are fine but more needs to be done
- Was Vigano's letter truth? Libel?
- Concerned because of what Vigano said about Pope Francis undoing what Pope Benedict did to McCarrick. Concerned hierarchy is not unified and seems too resistant to deeply rooted in protecting "church".
- Hard to think that priests we know and love could have been involved in such actions. Trust feels broken.

- Need more screening. People who aren't capable of handling temptation shouldn't be in a position of abuse
- Church needs to handle information it gets more effectively and address the problems squarely.
- Bishop should have addressed this on YouTube rather than a letter. So much better and more meaningful
- Fear for those being wrongly accused
- We feel angry because God sent his shepherds to take care of his sheep and they have damaged them
- We have compassion for the victims and for the priests who have abused them
- We believe that the church was wrong to hide the truth because the truth always comes to light
- We are concerned that parishioners will not want to contribute to the church any more because they believe that the church will use the funds to pay attorneys or lawsuits
- We recommend that all priests of the world have formation and spiritual retreats each year
- Raise awareness among seminarians so that they do not make the same mistakes
- It is important to have information meeting for each church every year
- Increase security measures and announce at each Mass that children have to be accompanied when they go to the bathroom

Following group summaries being given, Marty Swanson, Vice-Chair of the Diocesan Review Committee (English) and Gerry Lopez, Chair of the Diocesan Review Committee (Spanish) was introduced. They spoke for apx. 20 minutes, explaining the work over the last 20 years in the San Bernardino Diocese including safe environment, the Dallas Charter along with the fact that it has been modified over the years, DRC procedures, Audits and policies/procedures of Bishop Barnes when a case is reported.

Following Marty Swanson or Gerry Lopez's talk, index cards and pencils were passed out so that people could submit written questions or suggestions which could be addressed specifically to clergy, speaker or simply general questions. The questions were gathered, then read by Moderator and answered by either clergy, Speaker or both as appropriate. The written questions are transcribed as submitted:

1. How many abuse cases does the committee review annually in San Bernardino Diocese? *It varies. When the crises in 2002 hit, the committee went back decades so there were many cases to review. Now that number is much, much lower. In the last few years apx. 2-3 cases of allegations of abuse or boundary issues have been received per year.*
2. Over the past several decades there has been a concerted effort to influence our culture to encourage same-sex relationships. Does the diocese take any action to protect our children from these cultural efforts? *Our Church teaches the doctrine of our faith that sexual relations should only occur within the sacrament of marriage and further that marriage can only occur between a man and a woman. We do seek to engender compassion and understanding for those who are*

- homosexual and their families however we do not compromise our faith's doctrines.*
3. To whom should we report abuse or boundary issues? *Please report these to the Diocese of San Bernardino Office of Child and Youth Protection or call the Sexual Misconduct Hotline 1-888-206-9090. If abuse, you may also contact law enforcement directly.*
 4. Although it's great to hear that our Diocese is transparent. I'm still concerned that we are going to hear stories break over and over in the future as states conduct their own investigations. We're concerned still about how its going to affect our youth's perspective. *We share in those concerns and seek ways to reach out and dialogue with our youth.*
 5. Is there better screening of seminarians so gay ones are not allowed in? And of the teachers in seminary? *There is significant screening and psychological testing done for seminarians so that those who might have a propensity to abuse children or adults are not admitted. At the same time it is important to realize that multiple studies have shown that heterosexuals are statistically much more likely to engage in child sexual abuse than homosexuals.*
 6. Vigano's letter??? Explain. *Former Archbishop Vigano, who served from 2011 to 2016 as Nuncio or what we might consider a liaison between the US Catholic Church and the Vatican published an 11 page letter or "testimony" in which he made sweeping charges against the US and Vatican church officials, including Pope Francis, for mishandling the claims against Bishop McCarrick. He claimed that the hierarchy of the church in the United States as well as the Vatican knew of the allegations against McCarrick, did nothing or in one allegation, retracted restrictions placed on McCarrick reportedly by Pope Benedict and later elevated him. He ended his letter calling for multiple resignations including that of Pope Francis.*
 7. Are there standards the review committee uses in deciding cases? *The standard of proof for the allegations to be found "credible" is that there is a substantial probability that the conduct alleged is true.*
 8. Will our parish priest discuss their feelings about this situation in our church? We need to hear from them and their feelings. *Several of the clergy present at the townhall spoke of their personal experiences/feelings since this most recent crises has occurred.*
 9. What happens to a priest falsely accused. How will they be protected? *The Review Committee can find that the allegations are not substantiated and if so, the Diocese has reported that finding publicly to the parish the priest was serving at and was removed or suspended from when the allegations were made.*
 10. Can the review committee stop anyone from being arrested or charged? Are all cases reviewed or only those in which law enforcement weren't involved? *The committee cannot and will not do anything to interfere with law enforcement arrests or charges. Cases are reviewed that law enforcement is involved in and cases where they are not involved or have declined to charge the accused.*
 11. How about family members that have been affected? *The Diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection seeks to assist family members by counseling or other supportive services.*

12. Dr. Gene Abel, a researcher in the field of sexual violence for over 25 years states that most cases with boys being molested are attributed to heterosexuals. *Not a question but not disputed.*
13. At one time weren't priests married? If so, maybe we should again. *Yes at one time priests were allowed to be married. The vow of celibacy is not a doctrine and can be changed by the Church.*
14. As a committed Catholic of St. Catherine, what can I do to support our priests during this time? We thank you for your vocation of Priesthood. *The priests present at the townhall received a standing ovation following this question. They clearly appreciate expressions of support.*
15. How long do we have to wait for the Pope to "fire" a priest that was found guilty of sexual abuse? *This question was not answered at the townhall but referred to the Vicar General for the Diocese, Monsignor Lopez. He states, "There is no set time. It could take up to a year."*
16. Are all priests who are accused of sexual abuse suspended? In the past it seems they are just transferred to another parish...please advise? *Immediately upon an accusation being made, the accused priest is removed from priestly duties pending investigation. There have been cases substantiated in the past in the U.S. and elsewhere, that priests were transferred to another parish. That is not the case at present in our Diocese and prohibited under the Charter for Protection of Youth adopted initially in 2002 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.*
17. If clergy is found guilty and released from his duties, he is excommunicated immediately? *Excommunication can only be done by the Pope and is normally for conduct such as promulgating teachings contrary to the doctrine of the church. If the clergy is found guilty, he can be referred to Rome with a recommendation by the Bishop of being defrocked. The ultimate decision belongs to the Pope.*
18. I feel our doubt or mistrust has hurt our priest. We need to apologize to our priest for this injury. *Not a question but heard by priests present*
19. There is a very strong case for a public communique on what we now know our diocese is doing to ensure the safety of all. Is this in the works? *This question was not answered at the town hall but referred to the Vicar General who replied, "Not sure about this communique; it seems that we need to provide more regular reports and not wait to be reactive only."*
20. Who does the background checks on the new men going into seminary? *This question was not answered at the town hall but referred to the Vicar General who replied, "Our Diocese through the Vocations Office coordinates screening, with a high emphasis on psychological testing."*
21. When will the Bishop release the list of priests who have been removed or charge of abuse be released? *This question was not answered at the town hall however the list was placed on the Diocesan website Monday, October 8th.*
22. Is this current level of sexual abuse an historic high level or is this average? *This question was not answered at the town hall but referred to the Vicar General who replied, "We might need to review the 2 John Jay college reports for statistics; not sure about levels."*

23. After the Bishop recommends/decides to Rome to defrock a priest. How long does it take Rome to decide to take action? *See answer to #15 above*
24. If it is recommended to defrock a priest, can Rome change the punishment? *The Pope has the ultimate decision of whether to defrock a priest. He can choose to not follow the recommendation to defrock however he cannot defrock without the recommendation of the local Bishop.*
25. Are audits made public? Are the findings of the review committee made public? *The findings of the Review Committee on any particular investigation are not made public. The question was forwarded to the Vicar General for further response who replied, "We only receive a CPA type letter saying we are compliant as a Diocese. It is a one page letter."*
26. As you know, we have a FLE program in high schools across the USA in the wake of AIDS, can the Bishop or committee set up a new program involving priest abusers and related issues for middle schools and high schools? The goal for that is to prevent sexual abuse and also to train teachers. *This question was not answered at the town hall but referred to the Vicar General who replied he had not heard of FLE.*
27. Whatever happened to Cardinal Roger Mahoney? How did the Church deal with him? *This question was not answered at the town hall but referred to the Vicar General who replied., "He retired as an Archbishop when he turned 75 years old; still helps out at parishes; no other action taken in his situation that I am aware of."*
28. One of the main issues regarding the sexual abuse scandal is the moving around of credibly accused priests from parish to parish. I understand the church is obligated to provide assistance to all clergy. How much assistance should be provided to guilty priests (not with regards to the diocese)? *At the town hall the partial answer was given that therapy is provided but if the question went to financial assistance, the question would be given to the Diocese. After referral to the Vicar General he replied, "The Church is under Canon Law required to provide 'sustenance' even to priests guilty of crimes; the types and level of assistance varies from Diocese to Diocese."*

When neither speaker nor our clergy present (Fathers Gene Sabio, Jun Cajucom , Sagay Emmanuel and Adri Budhi along with Deacon Richard Heames English town hall and Fr. Jun Cajucom at Spanish town hall) could answer the question, the attendees were advised we would try to find the answers and a means of communicating them back.

Our priests were thanked for their vocation with a spontaneous standing ovation at english town hall. All attendees were thanked for their participation. Fr. Gene Sabio closed with prayer (english) and Fr. Jun Cajucom (Spanish).