

Healing, Reconciliation, and Hope Task Force
University of Scranton, 2018-20
Final Report
20 May 2021

Contents

1. Background
2. Origin of the Task Force
3. The University as a Source of a Reconciled Life
4. Method of the Task Force
5. Review of Events
6. Summary of Key Lessons Learned
7. Recommendations

Background

When the present-day clerical sex abuse scandal broke open in Boston in early 2002, people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, were horrified at the extent of the sexual abuse perpetrated upon so many innocent children. They were equally scandalized at the extent of the historic cover-up by the bishops, diocesan administrators, and religious superiors who were more interested in hiding the sex abuse perpetrated by their priests than they were in the safety of children and the healing of survivors. It became clear to many, both inside and outside the Church, that there was need for a major overhaul of the way the Church and its institutions dealt cement, and

Scranton] – every diocese in the state except Philadelphia and Altoona-Johnstown, which were the

Relations), Debra Pellegrino (Dean, Panuska College of Professional Studies), Lauren Rivera (Assistant Vice President, Student Life and Dean of Students), James Roberts (Chair, Department of Sociology/Criminal Justice), Fr. Patrick Rogers, SJ (Executive Director, Jesuit Center), Rose Sebastianelli (Professor, Operations & Information Management), Patrick Tully (Chair, Department of Philosophy), and Helen Wolf (Executive Director, Campus Ministries). Although she was not formally appointed to the Task Force, Elisa Tuffy (Specialist, Human Resources) was essential as an assistant and logistical coordinator. Joining the Task Force at its first official meeting on 19 October 2018, Fr. Pilarz gave the members their charge, an adapted version of which he would soon announce to the campus:

As they begin their task, I charge them to chart the path toward healing and hope, ever mindful of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear the Lord. Each of these gifts will be essential to the success of our collective efforts to address the sensitive, complex and daunting challenge that lies ahead.

The Task Force will help us harness the full range of resources that The University of Scranton, as a Catholic and Jesuit university can offer the church in this painful but pivotal moment. Their work will imagine and plan how we can respond, in ways both simple and sophisticated, to the needs of God's people.

While I do not want to preempt or prescribe the work of the Task Force, I do urge them to approach their work as members of a university community. Typically,

and reporting any allegations of abuse or misconduct to the appropriate civil authorities.⁵ We recognize that abuse of any kind causes lasting pain and damage for the abused, their families and friends, and for their wider communities. With prayer and compassion, we must continue to offer concrete support to all survivors of abuse and strive to make sure the sins and crimes of the past are not repeated.

Review of Events

In their planning and execution of events, Task Force members sought to create spaces in which important and difficult questions and topics could be raised and examined with the hope of fostering critical and creative engagement by participants. In doing so they intended to keep front and center three concerns. First, they intended to exercise solidarity with survivors of clergy sexual abuse by highlighting, learning from, and supporting survivors either as guest speakers, as colleagues on campus, or as attendees at sponsored events. Second, as members of a university they emphasized the necessary role for understanding before proposing solutions. Third, they maximized the potential for campus and community involvement by targeting specific constituencies, inviting speakers from across the Catholic Church's ideological spectrum, and by striking a balance between pastoral and intellectual dimensions. A brief description of every sponsored event follows.

November 27 – December 07, 2018

Electronic Survey: Geri Barber, Patrick Rogers SJ, and Rose Sebastianelli designed a campus-wide survey about how the Task Force should proceed in terms of programming. It was disseminated electronically and it remained available for the dates mentioned above. The survey was reviewed and analyzed in January 2019; see below for details.

November 28, 2018 (originally scheduled for November 16)

Royal Input at 5:30 p.m. in the DeNaples Campus Center, Room 405: The Task Force held a feedback session with students about what concerns they thought it should address. The event was moderated by Steven Browning and Julia Betti. Helen Wolf, Geri Barber, and Lauren Rivera assisted with planning. Having been postponed because of inclement weather, only seven students plus the moderators attended. Several questions were asked of attendees: What brought you here? Does anyone know anything about the Grand Jury Report, or what the University has done so far? What do you think the University might do – programs, etc.? Has your faith been impacted? Have you heard what other students are saying/feeling? What should we take back to the larger Task Force? What would you like to see in the future?

December 02, 2018—

Universal Prayers—Clerical Sexual Abuse: At the direction of Dr. Helen Wolf, Campus Ministries has arranged for the regular offering of petitionary prayers at Sunday Mass in relation to justice and healing for survivors of clergy sex abuse. Examples include: *That all victims of clerical sexual abuse, their families and friends, and all whose lives have been damaged*

⁵ In the United States the policies and procedures implemented by the Society of Jesus regarding response to survivors, prevention, response to allegations, and supervision are accredited through independent audits by Praesidium, Inc. For information about the adopted standards (2020) and about the continuing education every Jesuit in the U.S. undertakes in relation to creating safe environments for minors, visit <https://www.jesuits.org/about-us/protecting-children/>.

immeasurably by this abuse, may be healed by the hand of Christ; That our bishops and leaders of religious institutions may acknowledge by word and gesture repentance for past failures in responding to sexual abuse and bring comfort and healing to victims.

December 05, 2018

Staff and Faculty Roundtable at 12:00 p.m. in Brennan Hall, Room 509: The Task Force held a feedback session with faculty/staff to hear their ideas and

April 03, 2019

Prayer service for survivors of clergy sexual abuse, for their advocates, and for our wounded Church on the Dionne Green: This day-long event included communal prayers at 8:30 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 4:15 p.m. A fellowship luncheon of soup and bread was offered following the 12:00 p.m. prayer. T

September 23, 2019

which extended until 7:00 p.m., survivors confronted the Diocesan officials about such matters as being ignored, being re-traumatized by participation in the Victim Compensation Fund, and being insulted by the perception that survivors were mainly interested in financial reparation. One survivor offered to return a settlement check if the Diocese would provide a transparent, forensic account of how abuse cases were handled and how concealment was prioritized. Others in attendance voiced support for survivors and disappointment at a seeming lack of urgency on the part of the Diocese to redress the harm done.

April 07, 2020 (Canceled)

Film and Discussion Series at (i)-2 (l)Apet

*