



NEWSLETTER



THE SURVIVORS AND THE SYNOD

The Oversight Committee of Towards Peace, the spiritual support service for those who experienced abuse by Church personnel and in Church run institutions, was asked to facilitate a consultation with survivors of abuse as part of the Synod, currently being undertaken throughout the Catholic Church. The Steering Group of the Irish Synodal Pathway was anxious that the voices of survivors would be heard at the Synod.

Eight survivors were approached and, without hesitation, agreed to participate. A facilitated meeting was held with six of them on 21 May. Two, who were unable to attend this meeting, contributed by other means. All gave of their time generously, not just through attendance at meetings but also through reading, reviewing and amending the report of the consultation process. It was an intense process. Due to time constraints the project had to be completed quickly, putting the participants under a degree of pressure.

The report of the consultation process was sent to the Steering Group of the Irish Synodal Pathway at the end of June. It is planned that it will be made available to anyone who wishes to read it on the website of Towards Peace, www.towardspeace.ie from

the middle of August. It is not intended to summarise the report here but rather to make some observations on the process.

Those who participated in the consultation came from a variety of backgrounds. Some had been in institutions. Some had been abused by diocesan priests, others by members of religious orders. While they were not representative of all survivors, they came with a broad range of experiences.

The survivors were harmed by those who abused them when they were children. Further (secondary) harm was done to them by the manner in which Church authorities dealt with them when they came forward to tell of their abuse. They talked of being lied to, treated with disrespect and as though their only, or primary, motivation was a desire for financial compensation.

Those who agreed to participate in the synodal process had participated in consultation processes in the past. Their experiences of these processes were not always positive. The Church, they said, is good at listening but not so good at hearing. By this they meant that the Church listens to people when they say that things have to change in the manner in which it deals with abuse in the Church. All too often, however, the Church fails to follow through and make the necessary changes. For example, while they acknowledged that some dioceses and religious orders have gotten better at dealing with survivors, this is not the case with all of them. There is still, for example, an over reliance on legal and adversarial approaches to dealing with those who disclose abuse. In addition, while child protection has improved in the Church in some countries, in others the same failures that occurred in Ireland are being repeated

The participants argued that there is an element of manipulation in inviting survivors to participate in consultation processes that do not lead to real change. The Church can claim credit for listening to survivors, while not actually changing its practice. There is a cost

to survivors for participating in such processes. Often, their peers and fellow survivors accuse them of betrayal for agreeing to participate in consultation exercises with the Church. Some spoke of getting very abusive messages and even death threats when it became publicly known that they had engaged with the Church in this way.

It is remarkable, then, to consider that when the eight survivors were approached and asked to participate in the synodal process they all agreed without hesitation. They agreed despite having suffered great and enduring harm through the involvement of the Church in their young lives. They agreed despite not having received the care and concern they were entitled to expect when they disclosed their abuse to Church authorities. They agreed despite having negative experiences of other consultation processes.

We should ask ourselves why people who have been hurt in such a deep and enduring way would willingly expose themselves to the risk of further pain. One of those present at the meeting on 21 May said that he had little expectation that the Church is going to change but that he has to bear witness to the pain of his fellow survivors. Another spoke of her hope that

that the Church can and will change and engage in a meaningful way with survivors. Examples of good practice were offered. They spoke positively of the work of Diarmuid Martin, when he was Archbishop of Dublin. The lives of many were transformed when Pope Francis, in response to a request to do so, said that those who were separated from their babies in Mother and Baby Homes were not committing a sin by trying to find them later.

We all know that the abuse of children in the Church was appalling and most of us accept the need for good safeguarding practices in our parishes and diocesan agencies. We want survivors to be cared for and looked after properly. We know these things, in much the same way that we know that the Church in Ireland faces a range of challenges that are likely to require difficult decisions in the very near future. However, the survivors know about abuse in a different way, one that comes from the lived reality of dealing with its consequences on a daily basis. They know that the gospel is not being lived in spirit and truth where the reality of abuse in the Church is not being addressed. This knowledge is a burden the survivors carry on behalf of the rest of us. We should not let them carry it alone.

SACRISTY REGISTERS

Sacristy registers, sometimes referred to as sacristy sign in books, are a record of attendance in the sacristy before and after liturgical services. They should, for example, record the presence of the priest, deacon, altar servers, sacristan and others before and after mass. They should not include those whose presence is incidental, such as a parishioner coming in after mass to have a card signed. Sacristy registers can be obtained as hard back books and this is preferable to using loose sheets of paper as the register is a semi-permanent record.

The usual practice is for people in the sacristy to sign themselves in. However, the important thing is to have a reliable and accurate record of who was in attendance on the occasion in question. This will help if, for example, there is an allegation or complaint about something that happened on a particular occasion. Those charged with investigating the complaint or allegation will be able to check the register, find out who was present at the time and ask them about their recollection of events.

The presence of the sacristy register and the time taken to fill it in is also a reminder to those present of the priority given to safeguarding in the parishes of the Archdiocese of Dublin.

VISITING CLERGY

Visiting clergy should always be asked to produce a celebret before celebrating mass or the other sacraments. This is to ensure that the priest is in good standing and that there is nothing that would preclude him from exercising ministry. Asking a priest for his celebret can sometimes be a little awkward and

embarrassment can be spared by the visiting cleric offering his celebret rather than waiting to be asked to produce it. The fact that the cleric's celebret has been checked should be recorded in the sacristy register by putting the letters 'cb' in brackets after his name, like this: (CB).

CSPS TEAM CONTACTS

We have moved to new offices.
Our new address is 20 – 23
Arran Quay, Dublin 7, DO7
XK85



We are very happy to welcome Katherine Ward as our new Case Management Administrator. Noleen Rooney has returned to her position with the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes. We are very grateful to Noleen's colleagues for 'lending' her to us during the period when there were no diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes. Noleen was a wonderful colleague and friend and did a huge amount of work updating and improving our database and file management systems.

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CHRISTINE HALLORAN MEMBER OF THE DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

Christine Halloran is one of three safeguarding representatives in Gardiner Street Parish. She is one of the newer members on the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee having joined in May 2021.

Christine is a spiritual director trained in the Ignatian tradition and since completing her studies in Manresa Spirituality Centre in 2017, has worked on a voluntary basis in this Jesuit run parish. She is a member of the parish team and parish pastoral council, and her work covers a wide range of activities both within the parish and the larger Jesuit network.

Christine has worked closely with the parish priest in organizing and implementing liturgical services and the annual Novena of Grace and the Novena to the Sacred Heart. During Covid she was very involved in providing workshops and courses in Ignatian Spirituality to parishioners and lay employees of Jesuit works. She co-ordinates various teams of volunteers (Ministers of the Word, Eucharistic ministers, hospitality, etc.), and provides bereavement support for those who are grieving a loss.

Christine's role as safeguarding representative in the parish is one that is close to her heart. As a mother and grandmother, she understands that people's faith and trust in church authorities has been very badly damaged. Her hope is that safeguarding practices will in time be accepted as a given and that they will forever form an integral part of parish community life. Her vision is that people will begin to see their parish church and community as a place of safety and succor for all.