



CCOC

CATHOLICS FOR CHANGE IN OUR CHURCH

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

CCOC PROGRESS REPORT

on the Second Anniversary

of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report

on Clergy Sexual Abuse

August 14, 2020

CCOC

CATHOLICS FOR CHANGE IN OUR CHURCH

THE STATE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN PITTSBURGH

PROGRESS REPORT 2020



Supporting Abuse Victims/
Survivors and Their Families

B-



Financial
Transparency

C



Addressing Clericalism

D



Strengthening and
Diversifying the Clergy

D



Pathways to Lay
Leadership

C



Engaging & Empowering
Youth

D



Lay Oversight of
Diocesan Functions

D



Substantive Changes in
Church Hierarchy Structure

C-



Recognition of Breach of
Trust in Sex Abuse Scandal

D

OVERALL GRADE



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For an explanation of the criteria used in assigning each grade and how they were applied to determine the grade, please see CCOC's Progress Report, released on August 14, 2020, the second anniversary of the PA Grand Jury's Report on Clergy Sexual Abuse being issued.

Read the full Progress Report at www.CCOC-Pgh.org

CCOC PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GRAND JURY REPORT ON CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE

INTRODUCTION

[Catholics for Change in Our Church \(CCOC\)](#), an independent organization of Catholics seeking a greater role for the laity in the Church, released a [Public Statement](#) in August, 2019, on the one-year anniversary of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report on Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church.

Now, on the second anniversary of the PA Grand Jury Report, CCOC issues this Progress Report. This report provides a two-year assessment of the changes occurring in the Church in Pittsburgh as it responds to the sexual abuse crisis, and to declining participation from lay Catholics that's been accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent financial crisis.

As part of the Progress Report, CCOC has provided grades for the efforts of the Church in nine categories, resulting in an **overall grade of C-**.

It's Been Two Years Since the PA Grand Jury Report – What Has Happened Since?

We believe it helps to look at the last two years as two periods: the first, from August, 2018 to August, 2019; the second, from August, 2019 to August, 2020.

What Happened August, 2018 - August, 2019

Most of what happened in the first year we documented in CCOC's first [Public Statement](#). We encourage readers to view that before continuing. We characterize the first year as one of much emotional upheaval and a search for a way forward in the wake of the disturbing revelations of the horrible abuse of children by Catholic clergymen.

Laypeople were shocked and angered not only because of the abuse, but also because of the apparent systemic concealment of the abuse by the Church hierarchy that kept most of it out of the view and consciousness of the laity. This constituted a betrayal of a sacred trust between clergy and laity.

Many laypeople left the Church. Others were staunch supporters who while acknowledging the abuse, felt the need to defend the Church and began to tell others, including victims/survivors and their families, that it was "time to move on."

A third group of Catholic laypeople were committed Catholics, shocked and horrified, who cared about the Church and wanted to stay within it, but saw the need to demand changes. Most members of CCOC were in this group. This group looked to channel their anger and sense of betrayal into action. They wanted to stand with abuse victims and families and, rather than move on, to amplify their voices and encourage their healing. They also began to work in their parishes and in the diocese to discern how real and substantive change could occur based on six principles: co-responsibility, transparency, accountability, competency, justice, and trust.

Bishop Zubik and his central administration staff heard the pain and anger from victims and laypeople, including at four Listening Sessions held in the fall of 2018. Simultaneously, with parish consolidations there had already been a trend towards lower donations in parishes; the PA Grand Jury Report accelerated this trend. Layoffs by the diocese had to be made. The diocesan central administration began to struggle to provide support to the priests and parishes with an ever-smaller staff and capacity.

Parish priests and staff had perhaps the hardest job in the first year after the release of the PA Grand Jury report. Most, if not all, were already struggling to manage the consolidation of parishes in the diocese when the report was released. In addition to dealing with lower donations, laypeople poured out their anger and their concerns to the priests. Pastors and parish staff often felt on their own due to the diminished capacity of the diocesan structure to support them.

What became evident was that both the diocesan and parish staffs, and the clergy and laity within them, did not have adequate training for the crises they were experiencing, both personally and institutionally.

Within this turmoil, CCOC was full of hope. We released our Public Statement of 2019 in this spirit. CCOC called for the changes we believed necessary for the Church in Pittsburgh not only to survive, but thrive. We were hopeful the changes were possible, and being badly needed, would begin to materialize.

What Happened August, 2019 - August, 2020

CCOC has been disappointed in the rate of change in the past year. We have had limited success in engaging the diocese and parishes. While our membership of more than 1,000 remains passionate, CCOC has also been challenged in getting more laity to join us. We have been left to wonder: Why does the Church hierarchy, at a diocesan and a parish level, not welcome the help and support of talented and enthusiastic laypeople?

A stark realization for us was the hollowing out of structures at the diocesan and parish levels. The bishop and the diocesan staff, and pastors and their parish staffs, are individually and collectively staggering as they cope with the laity's reaction to the abuse revelation and upheaval in their parishes, as well as the changes forced upon them from shrinking donations and the consolidation of parishes.

As you will read in the next section of this report, it has been challenging for CCOC Focus Groups to engage the diocese and parishes due to this dynamic. Diocesan and parish leadership and staff have been preoccupied, limiting their ability to consider long-term solutions to the challenges.

An example: in spring 2019, Bishop Zubik and senior diocesan administrators began meeting with representatives of CCOC every two months. After four meetings, Bishop Zubik abruptly announced that he would no longer meet with us. He explained the meetings would be on hold until the *Future Search* initiative was moved forward. *Future Search* is a process of reconciliation and planning used in South Africa after apartheid and Rwanda after its genocide. Unfortunately, *Future Search* was abandoned by Bishop Zubik in March 2020 after over a year of planning. Meetings with CCOC were not renewed.

Another difficult realization by CCOC was that clericalism seems alive and well in the midst of these challenging circumstances. At both the diocesan and parish levels, the process of decision making continues to be top-down, with little collaboration with independent laypeople. This is in contrast to what is needed: a servant leadership model where the majority of the Church, the laity, are empowered and encouraged to find their talents and to help solve the challenges in the diocese and in parishes.

An equally difficult realization by CCOC is that many of the laity seem trapped in clerical thinking as well! Many lay Catholics have become apathetic. While they continue to participate in the Church (e.g. weekly Mass, funerals, weddings, confession, etc.), they are unengaged and don't support the Church financially or by volunteering. Yet these laity who grew up in a clerical church and became accustomed to it continue to expect and look for changes and solutions from the diocese or clergy, not from themselves.

The stresses caused by these dynamics were accelerated by the unrest, angst, and challenges unleashed first by the COVID-19 pandemic, and then by the shock of George Floyd's death and the resultant social and political unrest. This was especially true in parishes, whose very existence seemed to depend upon face-to-face participation. The halt of in-person parish events deeply frayed the sense of community. Parishes, their staff, and members have tried to be creative, but overall, the online connection has been different and, with relatively few exceptions, less fulfilling, as have restricted attendance events.

This sense of disconnect combined with apathy was a powerful disincentive for many laypeople to give back to their Church, especially monetarily, and it was aggravated for some by a time of economic insecurity. Donations dropped further. More layoffs occurred in the diocese, and even in parishes.

For those in CCOC, perhaps the saddest consequence is that victims of Church clergy abuse and their families seem to have been once again marginalized and forgotten by the diocese and parishes. Instead of lifting up those who have been hurt the most in the scandal, many in the Church, both the hierarchy and their lay defenders, seem to desire moving on for the sake of the Church. As with the pandemic, these Catholics seem to have grown tired of sharing the cross the victims, survivors and their families carry. This is unfortunate and sad.

A painful consequence of this has been the lack of follow-up to the recommendations and initiatives in the bishop's Pastoral Statement, *A Church Healing*, from spring 2019. Many of the actions outlined were positive and their suggestion made in earnest. But now, most have died on the vine due to a combination of a lack of energy, lack of institutional capacity, lack of commitment, and lack of will.

To CCOC, the attitude that declares the Church must move on from the clergy sex abuse scandal only deepens the wounds that still exist, in those who were abused and their families, and in the laity who do not feel the Church hierarchy and clergy fully understand the sense of betrayal and fundamental breach of trust caused by the scandal.

As a result, the laity are still mourning. In the past year, the laity have still not seen the substantive and positive changes needed in our Church. In the next section of this report, we outline the progress or lack thereof in various areas where CCOC would like to see and help to achieve changes in our Church.

PROGRESS REPORTS FROM NINE KEY AREAS

In last year's Statement, CCOC called on the Church to work toward substantive change in nine key areas. This section provides a progress report and overall grade for our Church – the diocese, parishes, and CCOC – in each of these nine areas. Grades range from B- to D, with the total overall grade of C-.

Supporting Abuse Victims/Survivors and Their Families: Overall grade = B-

Our focus group met in Fall 2019 with Ms. Jane Sarra, the new head of the Secretariat for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. Here are some activities we pursued after that meeting:

- Met with executives from two Pittsburgh service providers – PAAR (Pittsburgh Action Against Rape) and Center for Victims (CV) to inquire about their interest in being listed on the diocesan website as an alternative resource for survivors to contact for victims/survivors who may not be willing to work through the diocese. Both agencies agreed to be listed as a resource.

- Attended one of the pilot sessions of *A Path Toward Healing*, the first parish program created by the Director of The Office of Accompaniment. One of our members, a licensed counselor specializing in working with abuse and trauma victims, met one-on-one with the Director and provided professional consultation on enhancements to the program.
- Our focus group assisted in drafting CCOC's program to partner with parishes, including promoting healing, compassion, and empathy. The CCOC team consulted with one pastor several times on how to engage with pastors. Our focus group met with one parish and its pastoral council to share these ideas and was met with suspicion and dismissiveness.

Work remains to achieve a compassionate approach and healing environment across our diocese. One pastor printed a bulletin item expressing skepticism about the credibility of an accusation against another priest and asking for prayers for the priest– but did NOT request prayers for the possible survivor, or for survivors in general.

Our focus group recognizes the healing potential of programs that have a Restorative Justice (RJ) approach – allowing sexual abuse victims/survivors to share their journeys in a respectful and compassion environment via [healing circles](#). *A Path Toward Healing* contained RJ principles. To continue to learn about the RJ model, our focus group attended a conference held at Wheeling University in February, 2020. Our focus group continues to network and collaborate with people who strive to use a Restorative Justice approach.

Financial Transparency: Overall grade = C

Last year CCOC requested that a broader scope of financial information be made available by the diocese, specifically in these areas:

- Publish an audited financial report of the diocese including financial statements, footnotes, and reports of the independent auditor for all entities under the control of the diocese.
- Produce and publish a Lay Compensation & Vendor Expenditure Disclosure document yearly with the published annual financial report.

The diocese continues to publish financial information only for the Central Administration Fund, and not for the other entities under the control of the diocese. There is no published expenditure report.

CCOC continued to request that the Diocesan Financial Council reflect greater independent lay review. Although the Finance Council expanded in July 2019, the members were hand-selected by the Bishop.

Addressing Clericalism: Overall Grade = D

CCOC's efforts included the formulation of a description of clericalism. Our focus group produced a detailed packet of information on our experiences of clericalism. We met in January with Dr. Linda Ritzer, Secretary for Parish Services, and diocesan Chancellor Ellen Mady to discuss strengthening parish pastoral and finance councils. Kevin Hayes made a presentation during a national conference on co-responsibility held at the University of Notre Dame in March.

We were discouraged by the results of the meeting with Dr. Ritzer and Ms. Mady. While our conversation was cordial, they made it clear that, in their view, the role of the councils was limited to supporting their pastors in the process of parish reorganization. Attention to how the councils would participate in pastoral planning would have to wait. We were also dismayed to learn that Bishop Zubik's plans for *Future Search* had been abandoned.

Strengthening and Diversifying the Clergy: Overall Grade = D

Last year, we called on the diocese to include women in highly visible diocesan-wide leadership roles and to work to increase women's voices and their votes in matters of Church governance. We note that a number of key diocesan leadership roles are held by lay women, including Ellen Mady as Chancellor; Anna B. Torrance, JD, Secretary for Catholic Education and Evangelization; Dr. Linda L. Ritzer, DMin, Secretary for Parish Services; Jane Sarra, Secretary for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults; and Jennifer Antkowiak, Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations.

Many key leadership positions, though, including those in the General Secretariat and Tribunal, are held exclusively by clergy. We also note it was disappointing that the word "women" never appeared in the Bishop's pastoral letter, *The Church Healing*, even though there were numerous people at every listening session spoke in favor of women priests and deacons and married priests.

In our meetings with the Bishop last year, we raised the topic of diversifying the clergy, including the ordination of married priests and women deacons and priests. The Bishop stated the he did not have the authority to change Church law. We stressed that if he was supportive of women being deacons and priests, he could advocate for it at USCCB gatherings, or at least present it for discussion. Racial diversity within the clergy of Pittsburgh was not an original focus of our group, but in light of recent events, our awareness has been raised. The designation of St. Benedict the Moor Parish as a Personal Parish for the Black Catholic community, at the parishioners' request, is a positive step. At the present time, the diocese of Pittsburgh counts only two Black priests among its clergy. And, obviously, no women.

Pathways to Lay Leadership: Overall Grade = C

The Pathways to Lay Leadership (PLL) team, both independently and as a focus group of CCOC, seeks to encourage, educate, and prepare lay people to use their gifts and talents in leadership roles to further the Church's mission. We continue to call on the hierarchy to collaborate with us in this endeavor, both at the diocesan and the parish level.

PLL: Overcoming obstacles, COVID as catalyst

PLL developed an outline for a multi-phase program for lay leadership development, but we were not able to gain traction for piloting it in a parish without diocesan endorsement. We subsequently met with Anna Torrance and members of the Office for Catholic Education and Evangelization, as well as the director of the Office for Accompaniment in the Secretariat for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, who was developing a program called *A Path Toward Healing*. This program, originally designed to support victims of abuse and their families and parishes, also provided a foundation for lay engagement and development. PLL members were trained to serve as facilitators of the *A Path Toward Healing* program, provided feedback, and participated in pilots of the advanced program phases. Unfortunately, the start of the COVID outbreak marked the end of this program, and this opportunity for collaboration disappeared.

Identifying a need for qualified and willing lay speakers to provide adult education programs in our parishes, PLL collaborated with the Association of Pittsburgh Priests (APP) to create a Speakers Bureau. Working with the diocese to vet a list of speakers, we requested diocesan endorsement and support in rolling out the Speakers Bureau to the parishes. This final step was never completed, and the Speakers Bureau has gained minimal awareness and traction.

When the COVID pandemic hit in March 2020, PLL chose to view it as an opportunity to engage and develop the laity in a new way: through interactive online events featuring expert speakers from across the nation. In collaboration with the APP, PLL has organized and hosted five virtual events to date with nationally-known speakers including [John Carr](#) of Georgetown University, [Eileen Burke-Sullivan](#) of Creighton University, and theologian, author and storyteller [Megan McKenna](#). Interest and engagement in these events have been high, with well over 100 participants at each session, including some from across the U.S. and Canada. Over 300 people registered for the most recent program in August 2020, and well over 200 participated live. These sessions will continue through the pandemic, and likely beyond.

Parishes: Some bright spots amid fear and overwork

In the context of the parish consolidations, the clergy sex abuse scandal, and the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not surprising that many pastors and administrators are simply trying to weather the storm rather than embracing new initiatives – even ones that would bring them much-needed help from qualified and motivated lay people.

However, there are bright spots giving all of us hope. At St. Mary Magdalene Parish (formerly St. James Wilkinsburg, St. Charles Lwanga, and St. Bede), the extremely active pastoral council and finance committee are empowered by the clergy team to put forth their vision and execute it. Among other activities, their Social Ministry program serves 200+ families per month, and parishioners conduct monthly letter writing campaigns on social justice issues. St. Ferdinand and Sts. John & Paul Parishes engage literally thousands of volunteers, many in lay-created and lay-led initiatives. Prince of Peace/St. Mary of the Mount Parishes are involving the clergy, staff, and laity in a program leveraging the principles of *Divine Renovation*, a key goal of which is to engage and empower the laity.

Unfortunately, openness to lay leadership inspired by the Holy Spirit is not part of a consistent vision being promoted by the diocese in the parishes. Where it exists, it is wonderful and energizing. Where it doesn't, it is stunting our parishes and fueling the decline of the Church.

Diocese: Focus on operations, no vision for a less clerical Church

As resources have continued to shrink, diocesan officials, pastors and administrators are primarily focused on the operational and financial aspects of the parish consolidations. Unless there are other resources within the parish to manage the operational issues, the pastor/administrator does not have sufficient time and attention to focus on pastoral care or lay engagement. Diocesan staffing and resources for lay development programs have been lost, as in the example of the *A Path toward Healing* program. The *Future Search* initiative would have enabled clergy, staff, and the laity to collaborate in creating the vision for the future of the Church in Pittsburgh, but it was abandoned.

Considering all of the above, we can only conclude that there is not a vision for a Church that is less clerical and more open to co-responsibility of the laity in our diocese.

Engaging and Empowering Our Youth: Overall Grade = D

To enhance youth engagement, this focus group has taken the following steps:

- We communicated with and later attended a lecture and workshop by Dr. Leonard DeLorenzo, McGrath Institute for Church Life, University of Notre Dame.

- We met with the youth minister at Robert Morris University to discuss the most pressing faith and social issues facing college students.
- Our focus group created a survey to be deployed to college students electronically this fall. We hope to better identify challenges and understand prevalent attitudes and needs amongst practicing Catholic and former or distant Catholic young adults.

To encourage a life of faithful discernment and service, the Church must reach young people where they are in a new kind of apostolate – in schools, in social settings, on digital social media, on college campuses, in the workplace. Currently the diocese relies on the many devoted lay ministers, Directors of Religious Education and Youth Ministers at the parish level to engage the youth (age < 18). There is great variability in the quality of these programs. While the diocese has initiated youth-targeted ministries such as The Culture Project, reach so far appears to have been limited.

Young adults (age 18 – 30) are often on “auto pilot;” many do not participate in their parishes at all. Young adults may or may not return to the Church when planning marriage. Consequently, fewer faithful young adults are visible to our youth as examples. The Young Catholic Professionals of Pittsburgh gather for luncheons and Mass, but capture a small subset of the total Catholic young adult population, particularly in the time of Coronavirus.

Lay Oversight of Diocesan Functions: Overall Grade = D

On August 14, 2019, the diocese issued a press release from the Bishop, which stated: “...my pastoral letter, *The Church Healing*, outlined actions for a renewed commitment to healing of victims/survivors, financial transparency, accountability, ongoing formation for clergy and continued listening. All of these steps are either completed or are in motion.”

At about the same time, the Diocesan website noted that the Bishop was establishing The Church Healing Commission. Its mandate was to assist him in fulfilling the five-point action plan that he outlined in *The Church Healing* pastoral letter.

The only concrete action taken by the Bishop to involve the laity in these efforts was the July 10, 2019 creation of an "advisory commission" together with the addition of new members to the Diocesan Financial Council. The fact that the members of the commission and Finance Council are selected and appointed by the bishop raises questions about these groups' will and capacity to provide truly independent and objective lay input and oversight.

Substantive Changes in Church Hierarchy Structure: Overall grade = C-

In the Public Statement last year, we called for substantive changes in the structure of our Church hierarchy and administration. By substantive, CCOC meant something visible and apparent to all, especially the laity, that could be viewed as real change in the clerical nature of the Church's organization. Unfortunately, no substantive changes in Church structure have occurred.

Instead, the changes instituted reflected the top-down management style that characterizes clericalism. To CCOC's knowledge, there was no clear and unambiguous move towards co-responsibility or synodality. Bishop Zubik made gestures by appointing new people to diocesan advisory councils or committees, but unfortunately, these were still fully controlled by the diocese. No independent groups, such as religious orders or CCOC, chose appointees of their own. In March 2020, one of the most promising initiatives for structural change, *Future Search*, was ended abruptly by Bishop Zubik.

Recognition of Breach of Trust in Sex Abuse Scandal: Overall grade = D

In the Public Statement last year, we asserted it was imperative the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) create and publish an explicit and unambiguous statement that, collectively and institutionally, the hierarchy of the Church over the past 70 years had broken a sacred covenant of trust with the victims/survivors and the laity. CCOC felt this was a crucial step in the journey for victims/ survivors, their family members, and the entire Church. While we acknowledged bishops of several dioceses had issued statements of accountability, CCOC believed the USCCB should take a step at the national level to acknowledge and own the breach in trust with one unified voice.

Had such a step occurred, members of our Church might have been more willing to forgive, or begin the process of reconciliation. We would have seen and heard the bishops' own examination of conscience, acknowledging responsibility for what they and their predecessors did regarding predatory sexual abuse. And we, the members of the laity, might have been more able to acknowledge our own sins of omission, the denial of reality we chose even when we knew of isolated incidents of abuse.

But a bishops' public statement acknowledging their breaking of a sacred trust never happened. As such, true and authentic healing has not yet begun, nor will it until the USCCB takes up the call to issue a clear statement of accountability and apology.

We want to acknowledge the work of some bishops toward accountability. In the preface to the USCCB's 2019 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Archbishop Jose Gomez, President of the USCCB, states, *"My brother bishops and I want to apologize to all those who have endured abuse at the hands of someone in the Church and we want to express our pastoral commitment to helping every victim-survivor find healing and hope."* And later in the same preface, *"Again, I want to express the bishops' deep sorrow for our past failures and the damage that was done to victims and their families. I pray that together, through our continued efforts, we can continue working toward the goal of ending the scourge of child sexual abuse, not only in the Church but in the wider society."*

Such statements are commended. But they were buried in the preface of a report that got little attention. They have had minimal impact on the larger Catholic Church, especially the laity in the pews.

THE WAY FORWARD

In last year's Public Statement by CCOC, we began "The Way Forward" section with a call to prayer. We repeat it now: all of us in the Church need to spend time in God's presence asking for guidance by the Holy Spirit. Then, as Pope Francis reminds us, with humility in listening and boldness in speaking, we may together truly discern a way forward.

CCOC now believes our role in the Church may be more prophetic. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *"Lay people...fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, 'the proclamation of Christ by word and testimony of life.' For lay people, [this] 'is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.'"* (CCC, 905) CCOC calls upon the hierarchy, clergy, and laity to see how clericalism is impeding structural and substantive changes that are sorely needed. And also to see that minor and inconsequential gestures are window dressing that is not letting the Spirit work in our Church.

Pope Francis, too, has called for needed positive changes in our Church and has spoken for more co-responsibility and synodality. For CCOC, co-responsibility means real sharing of power and authority, not just lip service or small changes within the old clerical structure. To us, synodality means empowering faith communities to find the best path forward for their area or region. There is no one answer that applies to all situations; instead, synodality calls for collaborative discernment of how the Spirit calls forth gifts, talents, and creative ways of thinking about sharing God's love in a community of faith.

Calling for Changes in Structure and Approach

We continue to call for substantive changes in the structure of our Church, particularly including expanded roles for and oversight by lay people. Substantive changes are those based firmly in the Gospel message, reflected in new or adapted structures, and clearly visible to the People of God.

We mentioned above the many difficulties and attitudes that have crippled the diocesan administration's ability to undertake long-term strategic changes that are critical for making the Church sustainable. Nevertheless, Bishop Zubik and his administration can and should encourage groups and parishes within the diocese that have a willingness and energy to try new approaches.

Recognition of the Breach of Trust by Church Leadership

In Section 2, we noted Archbishop Gomez's apology in the 2019 report on child abuse prevention. We call on all bishops to take a stand and advocate vigorously for an explicit and unambiguous statement of responsibility by bishops and the hierarchy to be ratified by all the bishops at a USCCB meeting.

A Call to Action: Recommendations from the CCOC Focus Groups

Each CCOC focus group will continue our work to effect positive change in our Church, and to meet the needs of the Body of Christ. We call upon the hierarchy and clergy to join us. We remain committed to six principles: co-responsibility, transparency, accountability, competency, justice, and trust. We believe these are the most critical issues that deserve the focus and efforts of the whole Church:

Supporting Abuse Victims/Survivors and Their Families

This focus group seeks to instill healing and empathic environments to address the needs of survivors, families, and parishioners, at the individual, parish, and diocesan level. We call for education and awareness on sexual abuse, support structures for survivors, and implementation of healing models, including those based on restorative justice. This needs to be done at a diocesan level. We also believe that parish-based programs may offer the best and most effective compassionate presence to abuse victims/survivors and families. We continue to collaborate with anyone who shares these goals.

Financial Transparency

This focus group is committed to working with the diocese to create independent, lay oversight of financial functions that adhere to best practices and provide detailed accountability to all Catholics in the diocese of both diocesan and parish finances. Specifically, we call on the diocesan administration to:

- Publish financial information for all diocesan entities, not just the Central Administration Fund;
- Adopt procedures for the Diocesan Finance Council that clearly show a commitment to independent review of finances by lay people;
- Encourage parish pastors to welcome CCOC members to work with their finance and pastoral councils in establishing sound, strong financial transparency practices.

Addressing Clericalism

We are encouraged by Pope Francis' call for shared discernment and decision-making—*synodality*—at all levels of the Church. We see the Church's members responding in many areas of the world. We hope to rally the lay faithful and like-minded clergy in our area to make synodality real in Pittsburgh as well. We call on our sisters and brothers in Christ to join us in:

- Strengthening existing structures of synodality such as parish pastoral councils and finance councils; and exploring other ways in which synodality might be expressed.
- Developing new structures of shared responsibility, such as regional or vicariate level gatherings that might connect parish pastoral councils with the Diocesan Pastoral Council;
- Growing synodality in the Catholic Church in other parts of the world;
- Greater participation in the formation of our clergy.

Strengthening and Diversifying the Clergy

We call on the diocese to work to increase women's voices and their votes in matters of Church governance. We call on the bishop to make substantial, measurable changes. What are the goals that he has going forward? What are his plans to promote equity for women in the Church? How is he addressing the racial disparity in ordained clergy in the Pittsburgh diocese? Much more work needs to be done, and diocesan efforts need to be communicated more effectively.

We think it important to have an event of some type, possibly a March or Rally, to emphasize the need for more leadership roles for women in our Church.

We also think it is important to conduct a survey to better understand our members and their viewpoints on Church issues, including diversity and strengthening the clergy.

Pathways to Lay Leadership

The PLL focus group calls on all lay Catholics to see themselves as equally responsible for the mission and work of the Church. We ask the hierarchy and clergy to continually articulate a vision of lay empowerment and engagement. We ask them to embrace, not rebuff, motivated and competent laypeople who offer their gifts and efforts to the Church. We recommend that the diocese collaborate with clergy, parish staffs, and pastoral councils to shift most operational management of parishes to people other than the pastor or administrator, so he can focus on pastoral care and lay formation. Some "ecclesial and social co-responsibility" should also be shifted to the laity, as called for by Pope Benedict. We are all the Church, and we need to work co-responsibly to get the work of the Church done.

Engaging and Empowering Youth

CCOC calls upon the diocese to engage and empower our young people in the following tangible ways:

- Publicly celebrate the gifts of the Spirit in our young people. The diocese must make clear that lay and clerical vocations are coequal and essential to the Church.
- Develop a meaningful social media presence with value to youth and young adults.
- Create an app for teens, and another for young adults. Let them speak and provide them opportunities to learn, serve, and grow in everyday holiness.
- Require every parish council to have representation by high school and college youth, as well as a young adult representative.

Lay Oversight of Diocesan Functions

We call on the Diocese to include groups like CCOC and other lay people in processes such as appointing members to diocesan advisory councils, overseeing a whistleblower protection program, soliciting independent lay input into the review of the bishop's performance, and lay input into the process of selecting a new bishop when that becomes necessary.

CONCLUSION

Much has changed in our country and world in the last year. Our Church has changed as well. Lay people are coping with changes in home life, work life, social life, neighborhood, and yes, their Church life, too. Clergy are coping with changes in their parishes, and in their personal lives. Bishops are coping with changes to their dioceses, and in their individual lives.

And yet, in the midst of this, the phrase "The more things change, the more they stay the same" applies.

The Church remains too clerical. While this is obvious to many, others are reluctant to acknowledge it. And deconstructing the clerical structures of the Church will not be easy. There is too much power within those structures, and few will relinquish that power easily or even willingly. The laity must gird ourselves for the long haul to "fight the good fight" (1 Tim 6:12) for the change that is needed.

CCOC's strength in the efforts to dismantle clericalism will be Jesus, the one who suffers, as well as the resurrected Christ. As we did in last year's Public Statement, CCOC holds up the victims and survivors of clergy sexual abuse and asks God's blessing on them. They have borne the greatest cross in this crisis, with their original abuse and as they relived it with the PA Grand Jury Report and its aftermath.

By focusing on the abuse victims and survivors the Church can reclaim its spiritual identity. As Paul states, "God has composed the body so that the greater dignity is given to the parts which were without it, and so that there may not be disagreements inside the body but each part may be equally concerned for the others." (1 Corinthians 12:23) When we "give dignity" to abuse victims and survivors, along with others who have been marginalized by the clerical structure of the Church, including Black Catholics, Latino Catholics, other racial and ethnic minorities, those without stature and money, and women -- it is then members of the Church can be reconciled and our Church renewed. For as Jesus points out, "Whatever you do for the least of my people, you do it for me." (Matthew 25:40)

A special note is appropriate here for the growing awareness regarding systemic racism in the wake of the terrible deaths of Black men and women that have garnered widespread attention. White Catholics are called to recognize that racism exists within the structure of our Church and has been perpetuated by laity, clergy, and Church hierarchy alike. With humility, CCOC leaders, all of whom are white, asked Katharine Dansy-Dean, a member and lay leader within St. Benedict the Moor Parish, recently named the personal parish for the Black Catholic community in the diocese of Pittsburgh, to share some thoughts on this issue. Here is what Katharine said:

"Systemic racism is prefabricated by humans and exists in most institutions including the Catholic Church. Racism is inconsistent with the Word of God. Racism creates false idols.

If today you hear His voice harden not your heart. (Psalm 95:8) We, as people of faith and as Christians in the body of Christ, inherited the responsibility to take the lead in eradicating racism within our communities. Daily we must rely on the Word of God to confront the byproducts of racism that we witness.

To my sisters and brothers in Christ, don't wait for an invitation to reach across the aisle to offer friendship, network and support. The Holy Spirit will allow our efforts to build towards the kingdom building of our community. If your soul knows that "Black Lives Matter" to God, then it's simply a matter of yielding your life to God's will.

Laity, clergy, and Church hierarchy have a co-responsibility for the healing and reconciliation needed in our Church of Pittsburgh. The healing of victims and survivors of abuse must be the first priority. This can be followed by the healing needed for all lay people of faith as they deal with the sacred trust broken by clergy abuse. Parishes need much healing in the wake of large changes both before and after the start of the pandemic. But we also need to be sensitive to the healing needed in the clergy and religious; they, too, are struggling on many fronts. And we need to seek the healing of members of the hierarchy. As Henri Nouwen writes, *"...there is great poverty, deep loneliness, painful isolation, real depression, and much emotional suffering at the top of our Church."* An awareness of the brokenness we all face can be the starting point of dialogue and reconciliation.

All this healing requires the grace of God. With God's grace, we hope the clergy and Church hierarchy can embrace the gifts and talents of lay people who are waiting to contribute to the life of the Church, but do not want to do so in the current clerical structure where co-responsibility does not exist, and authority is not shared. All members of our Church need to share in the authority of compassion modeled by Jesus.

All the challenges our Church faces call for trust in God, and trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis has urged the practice of synodality for our Church to discern the path ahead. CCOC supports the Pope in this concept! Synodality means "walking together." Synodality, according to the Vatican's International Theological Commission, is not simply about involving people in decision making, but involving all the baptized in discerning God's will and listening to the Holy Spirit. The goal is to find the best ways for every baptized person to fulfill the Church's mission of proclaiming God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ to the world.

Pope Francis speaks of the discernment at the heart of synodality: *"To speak frankly and listen openly are fundamental [to] a process of discernment. Discernment is not an advertising slogan, it is not an organizational technique, or a fad of this pontificate, but an interior attitude rooted in an act of faith. Discernment is the method and at the same time the goal we set ourselves: it is based on the conviction that God is at work in world history, in life's events, in the people I meet and who speak to me. For this reason, we are called to listen to what the Spirit suggests to us, with methods and in paths that are often unpredictable. Discernment needs space and time.* (Address to the Synod of Bishops on Young People, October, 2018)

Earlier this year, Pope Francis announced that synodality will be the theme of the 2022 Synod of Bishops. We encourage all Catholics in Pittsburgh to put synodality into practice now! We encourage all Catholics in Pittsburgh to join CCOC, which you can do on our website, www.CCOC-Pgh.org. We encourage all lay Catholics in Pittsburgh to get involved in their parishes and work for the positive changes needed in our Church, to support the clergy but also challenge them to change.

This call to action goes beyond Pittsburgh. CCOC has connected with other Catholic lay organizations from Houston to Canada and California to Ireland whom the Spirit has motivated in similar ways. We are members of a coalition called WATCH (We Are The CHurch.) These grassroots connections of like-minded Catholics will only strengthen the many voices that can collaborate with other laity, clergy and bishops to encourage co-responsibility and synodality and make the positive changes needed in our Church.

If there are other lay groups in other cities reading this document, we hope you may find the Progress Report useful as a template for your own evaluation of the Catholic Church in your diocese. You, too, can consider grading the efforts of your Church – laity, clergy, and hierarchy – as we have done. You might decide to use the nine categories we have described in this Report, or develop your own. The goal where you are would be the same as we have; namely, to identify what positive changes are needed to help your faith community not only survive, but thrive!

And finally, with a clear perception of the challenges before us in our society and in our Church, may we nonetheless live with the hope of Christ's resurrection and in the power of the Holy Spirit. For as St. Paul writes,

*"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with **power** through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have **power**, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his **power** that is at work within us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."* (Ephesians 3:16-20)

ABOUT CATHOLICS FOR CHANGE IN OUR CHURCH

Catholics for Change in Our Church (CCOC) is an independent, grass-roots organization created and led by lay persons in response to not only what was revealed in the PA Report but also to the deep-seated, systemic problems plaguing the Church and amplified by the realignment of parishes in Pittsburgh. The 1000+ members of CCOC are confident the Holy Spirit is working in and through our organization to help us discern and then seek to implement positive changes needed in our Church right now.

CCOC's mission statement is: We are committed Catholics who care about their Church and recognize the need to empower laity to assume their rightful role through baptism as a priestly people within our Church. We, the People of God in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, call upon our Church clergy and hierarchy to work with us to collaboratively move our Church forward and to provide a template of change. We seek to work with anyone or any group seeking the same. We are focused on helping the survivors of sexual abuse and their families seek justice. We also believe the only way our Church can be sustained is if lay and ordained Catholics share a co-responsibility for the leadership and culture within our Church. These must be rooted in the gospel values of justice and mercy modeled after the Beatitudes, along with having the qualities of transparency, accountability, and competency.

CCOC is organized around seven (7) Focus Groups. These are: 1) Supporting Abuse Victims/Survivors and Their Families; 2) Financial Transparency; 3) Addressing Clericalism; 4) Strengthening and Diversifying the Clergy; 5) Pathways to Lay Leadership; 6) Engaging and Empowering Youth; and 7) Lay Oversight of Diocesan Functions.

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ON THE INTERNET

The CCOC website is: <https://ccoc-pgh.org/>, where you can find an electronic version of this report.

On our website, you can also learn more about our mission, our events and our leadership.

You can also join CCOC on the website at this link: <https://ccoc-pgh.org/register-with-us/>

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