



## **SMALL GROUPS – ONE PARISH FAMILY**

**The participants of the Healing Our Church program held at St. Ambrose expressed a desire to share with their parish family what those six weeks meant to them.**

**Their answers to various questions asked by Bishop Schlert are shared below.**

### **1. What were your key learnings?**

We learned that things are changing and the Church is listening to us.

Be aware and never be afraid to speak up.

I learned the importance of communicating, of sharing fears and concerns, of listening and understanding. Many of us feel exactly the same way - some are more forthcoming than others. I learned the importance of expressing our feelings and encouraging others to do the same.

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### **2. How have your feelings changed as a result of participating in Healing Our Church?**

I learned we all need to be more vigilant.

I have a renewed hope because by becoming more informed I am encouraged by what the Church is doing to address this crisis.

Hearing everyone give their reasons for why they remain Catholic greatly strengthened my feelings of unity and family within the Church. Knowing how much everyone's faith means to them gave me hope that the Church will survive.

Our group felt their feelings have changed to believe we are going forward and can share with others that the Church has recognized the abuse and is owning up to it, and most importantly, is trying to assist the Healing of the victims.

My feelings have changed in that I see how devastating this has been to our Bishop and to the good priests of our diocese. The shocking behavior of some who were trusted members of the priesthood is a disgrace and a sin against God and the Sacrament of Holy Orders, yet I will not allow them to negate my belief in the One, True Church.

I was reluctant to sign up for this program, but I am glad I did because I found fellowship and I saw the strong foundation of the Church.

It gave us the opportunity to share our feelings, beliefs and concerns and it was most valuable to be able to make recommendations to the Bishop and to our pastor.

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### **3. Which Action Steps Did You Take That Had the Most Impact?**

Praying and sharing our thoughts and feelings without reservation and with respect for others.

The Prayer of the Faithful contains invocations for the abused.

Writing "Why I Remain Catholic"

Making the commitment to attend the Healing Our Church Program

An increase in my prayer life

Prayers for the victims and the priests

I attended a Protecting God's Children class

Discussed healing more with others; was not afraid to speak up; educating others

Taking a more active role in the Church

Many stated that just coming together to meet, to pray, and to talk made them more comfortable to speak their minds

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#### **4. After Having Participated in the Healing Our Church Process, What Would You Want Your Pastor to Know? Are There Any Next Steps You Would Suggest?**

Include in the bulletin updates on the progress and changes regarding the crisis

Many expressed: We want prayers for the victims as a weekly part of the petitions in the Prayer of the Faithful

Many also expressed a desire to continue to meet because laity involvement is important!

More transparency!

There is still much anger and distrust in the Church, but not a lack of faith and not a wavering in our Catholic beliefs. The foundation of the Church is strong. We need to keep the dialog going; it cannot end after these sessions are over!

We are grateful that you are hearing us; please don't let us down and please follow through

I would want him to understand that every single person in his parish is a brick of the church. We are all important and equally loved by God – no cliques or hierarchy in the Church.

I have faith in the Church and believe this problem can and will be checked; however, some powerful changes must be made at the Papal level in order to quell and punish the offenders

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#### **5. Why I Remain Catholic**

Because my beliefs in Catholic teachings have not changed and I want to continue to be united with a community that shares my faith and beliefs

Shared by MANY - The Eucharist

It is the true Church founded by Jesus Christ

It is universal and you can receive the true Body & Blood of Christ

I have always been Catholic; I can't imagine anything else. It is the faith to which I was born and I will die accordingly. No human being can cause me to change the FAITH I LOVE!

Not because I always was, but because it is the true Church begun by Jesus Christ that has been around for 2,000 years AND the Eucharist is the center of our inner life of faith. It sustains us!

I cannot imagine any other denomination; I love the Roman Catholic Church and the Eucharist!

My faith is in God, not the Church. The Church is a tool or a process to use to become closer to God, but it is not God. We don't throw away a child who is bad; we love and nurture that child. We need to continue to love and nurture our Church.

The Church is the Body of Christ and therefore my ONLY path to salvation.

Because a man/priest does not make my faith. Catholicism is directly from Christ – it has survived all areas of scandal throughout the centuries.

In 2005 I made a choice to convert. I continue to deepen my conversion through the Sacraments, Prayer and Good Works.

Jesus taught the 2 greatest commandments: Love Him and Love One Another

He also taught to be forgiven, one must forgive. To receive mercy, be merciful

I will not give up my Faith because of people who sinned against Him and my Church

Because when I was baptized, I became a member of the Church that was founded by Jesus Christ.

While on a religious pilgrimage I knelt before the Eucharistic Miracle of Lanciano, Italy, which has been scientifically proven to be real body and real blood. I know when I receive Holy Communion, I receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

I believe in the Consecration of the Eucharist

The Holy Spirit inspired me to convert to the Catholic faith almost 50 years ago and I would not think of leaving it.

Receiving Christ in the Eucharist whenever I go to Church

I want to stay connected with God; leaving would disconnect from God and that is not a comfortable goal for me. Although I do not condone past actions of priests, bishops, popes – reform is necessary to put an end to their scandalous reputation

Wonderful bonds shared with fellow Catholics

Understanding of traditions going back to Jesus

I tried other churches and religions. I love the Mass, celebrating the life of Jesus the way we do at Mass.

I love the Liturgy and the feelings of peace and comfort

Because the Church is consistent in its services and I am comfortable with its teachings

The scandals in the Church dismay me, but they do not change my belief in God

The fellowship with other Catholics who share the same beliefs as I do

It is part of who I am

Since I am a practicing Catholic, the Catholic Church has been my rock as I moved two dozen times in ten states and belonged to sixteen parishes. The Church has always been my family. They are the Body of Christ through the Eucharist. It is how I know God. The Church, as a worldly institution, will always struggle for perfection. We must pray, and act if possible, to repair the reputation of the institution.

Because my faith is deeper than the frailty of mankind

I am and remain a Catholic because of Christ being the head of the Church. Christ is the founder of the Catholic Church.

Because of the Eucharist which through the consecration is the actual Body and Blood of Christ.

Because of reconciliation – receiving absolution from Christ through the priest.

Belief in the Eucharist and the one holy true Catholic Church

The Holy Eucharist

It is how I know God and keeps me connected to a faith community. It provides me with a foundation

Because I worship and adore Jesus and not man

Only Catholic Church offers the Body and Blood of Jesus in Communion

I believe during the Mass the priest, when he consecrates the bread and wine, it is changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ as Scripture teaches

I believe Jesus remains the same; He is the reason I go to Mass; He gives me strength for my life's journey

Because I believe Jesus is the head of our Church; we must pray for strength to never give up!

Totally because of the Eucharist

For God; if I leave, "to whom can I go?"

By leaving the Church I will not make it any easier for these victims nor ease their pain

Because this is God's home and as children of God we belong there. You can't bale out when things get tough. It is times such as this when we are called to do our, and His, best work.

Because my faith has nothing to do with the sins of a few (or a lot) of men.

When the Catholic Church was founded by the apostles with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it was designed to follow the perfect teachings and example of Jesus Christ. Therefore, I believe the design of the Catholic Church is perfect. Are members of the Church perfect? No, no one is perfect, but when priests, bishops and cardinals, those in authority, do not follow the perfect design, it can alter the direction of that perfect design. Leaders who do not follow the perfect design must be removed from their positions. But I will not remove myself from a church with a perfect design because I believe the Catholic Church with its teaching, Sacraments and guidance of the Holy Spirit offers me the best means of salvation. If I were to leave the Catholic Church because of the clergy abuse, I would be allowing myself to become another victim.

I found myself alone in my group for this question – everyone else was a "cradle Catholic" and had been greatly influenced by being raised in the faith. It took me many years of attending Mass, sitting in the back of the Church, putting in my time taking classes offered at St. Ambrose as well as through the diocese, to finally realize that I became a Catholic and remain a Catholic because of and through the guidance of our Advocate on Earth, the Holy Spirit. I finally realized it hadn't been "my" decision at all! When we make the time and take the time to listen and hear, the Holy Spirit guides us every day in every way.

I remain a Catholic for many reasons... to begin with, I choose to become a Catholic some 70 years ago. Later in my life, some 60 years later, having gotten the kids out on their own and finally being able to retire, my wife and I began to study the bible and the Word of God finally began to come through to me. I was finally able to see and understand where the Catholic teachings came from and to understand those teachings better. For those who are troubled and cannot deal with the abuse situation as Catholics, I strongly suggest they undertake an interest in, and understanding of, our faith by studying Scripture. To sum up, I remain a Catholic because my bond in faith and love with my Lord and my God are strong and become stronger with each passing day. I will credit this strength of faith largely to continuing devotion to studying Scripture.