

The Movement to Restore Trust

Summary of Recommendations by Workgroup

Introduction

Each of the six Workgroups of the Movement to Restore Trust met in-person an average of 5-6 times between December 8 and February 6, 2019. They consulted subject matter experts, studied foundational Catholic documents, and looked at best practices from across the United States. Some Workgroups consulted canon lawyers as part of their work; in other cases, we recognize that recommendations may go beyond what canon law currently provides. In all, the six workgroups produced over 50 pages of reports and draft recommendations.

This document summarizes the recommendations by Workgroup. There were some areas of overlap and some conflicting or duplicative recommendations need to be reconciled. This work is ongoing. By way of general observations, we would note the following:

1. Several of the groups recommended new oversight bodies or committees. The Organizing Committee has recommended as a Foundational Recommendation that the Bishop look at all consultative bodies to determine if they have an ongoing purpose, whether their charge should be clarified, and whether they ought to be given more responsibility. This would address some of the issues relating to consultative bodies but more work needs to be done to reconcile all of the recommendations in this area.
2. Related to no. 1, some of the groups made recommendations with respect to the Diocesan Review Board, which is mandated by the Dallas Charter. The Organizing Committee believes that before we can endorse a specific recommendation in this area, we need to study further exactly how the DRB is operating in the Diocese and how its operation could be improved.
3. Multiple groups recommended various methods (confidential, independent third parties, hotlines, EAP-style processes, fraud reporting systems) of reporting of concerns, by laity and by seminarians, of abuse and other acts of concern as well as complaints of misconduct by the Bishop.
4. There were several recommendations regarding oversight of the Bishop and the Diocese to ensure that we remain on track in implementing the reform recommendations. The Organizing Committee is recommending a periodic review of the Diocese's implementation of the MRT recommendations by a review team appointed by the MRT. The Organizing Committee is also recommending a periodic evaluation of the Bishop's performance, akin to a 360-evaluation.
5. As the time frame for the completion of these reports was quite short, there are areas in our reports that require further study or input from people with direct knowledge. Similarly, some recommendations may need to be reconsidered in light of the new Child Victims Act and the fact that the Diocese will be facing a number of lawsuits in which discovery will be mandated.

Group 1 –Transparency Around the Nature and Scale of the Abuse in the Diocese and Financial and Spiritual Reparations for Victims/Survivors

A. Full Disclosure of the Depth of Abuse

We recommend the use and format of a website like that of [the Diocese of Boston - Categories of Archdiocesan Clergy Accused of Child Sexual Abuse](#) to report the names of priests with allegations against them. Our full report contains recommendations on the format and fields to be used.

B. Ensure the competency, autonomy & independence of the DRB

We recommend that the composition and deliberation process of the DRB be reviewed to ensure it is adequately autonomous and independent and not controlled solely by the risk management and litigation process.

C. Review, clarify and communicate the various due process standards applied to investigations and improvement of the complaint and investigative process

Our full report contains four pages of recommendations which we find to contain best practices (grounded in comparisons of the DOB policies and practices to those from the dioceses of several other cities (Albany, Boston, Charleston, Cincinnati etc.)

D. Significantly improve and increase the support provided to victims

Victims should: (1) be provided a list of independent, accredited trauma-informed/specific counselors and/or an independent hotline to take their reports of abuse; (2) have a victim advocate to guide them throughout the entire process (4) have access to a full spectrum of treatments and support services/therapies paid for by the DOB and provide by independent, accredited trauma-informed and trauma-specific counselors; (5) receive legal support from an Assigned Counsel program funded by the Diocese.

E. Prevention, Training & Education

We recommend establishing a DOB Office for Pastoral Support and Outreach and a Clinical Consultation Board to support this office. We recommended DOB lead locally with best-practice, “evidence-informed” child abuse prevention training. Other recommendations: (1) improved training on trauma-informed care and power dynamics; (2) outreach to priests/seminarians; (3) expansion of “vulnerable adult” definition in the Code of Conduct; (4) DOB voluntarily adopt federal & NYS-compliant sexual harassment policies.

F. Creation of “Guardians of Trust” to monitor compliance with Diocesan policies addressing the abuse, investigations and reparations for victims

The Guardians of Trust would serve as the guardians of the public good, the good of the Church, and the general good of the community and would report back to the laity in the Diocese.

G. Work to Effectively & Efficiently Resolve new cases under the Child Victim’s Act - With the enactment of the CVA into law in New York State, we urge the Diocese to aggressively work to resolve cases as soon as possible and commit to working effectively and efficiently with victims and their legal counsel.

Group 2 –Transparency about all diocesan operations

A. Governance Structure acknowledging the importance of the faithful as participants and primary recipients

We are recommending that the Diocese create a governance structure, consistent with Canon Law and best practice that recognizes the faithful as the ultimate source of all funds and beneficiary of all the services of the diocese.

B. Provide complete financial transparency, consistent with recognized best practices, of all relevant financial components of the handling of sexual abuse cases

This includes (1) detailed information about quantifiable costs, sources of funds, past and future, and the financial impact of non-quantifiable costs; (2) complete financial accounting of previous sexual

abuse claims, including all costs and all sources of these funds; and (3) financial estimates from potential future sexual abuse claims. The full report contains an Attachment “A” which details the content of the financial disclosure.

C. Diocesan Financial Transparency

Institute recognized best practices regarding all financial matters within the Diocese to insure appropriate transparency for the faithful of the Buffalo Diocese. The report contains 2.5 pages of specifics.

D. Empower and Expand the Oversight of the Financial Council

We recommend that the diocesan Finance Council be empowered to assume the expanded responsibilities that are specifically addressed in sections 492, 493 and 1277 of Canon Law. The effect of this would be to raise the current level of oversight from a largely advisory function to a more consultative and consensual role. The majority and the chair should be lay persons.

E. Institute Best Practices Regarding Parish Financial Matters

Our recommendations here included training, process, reporting and communication so that parish financial information is able to answer the basic question of what happens to every dollar collected at the parish.

Group 3 - Accountability for bishops

A. Bishop commits to sharing responsibility for the health and holiness of the Diocese with clergy and laity¹

While recognizing that some sharing of responsibility, especially what is required by Canon Law, is already in place, the group strongly recommended that the Bishop give all DOB consultative bodies actual authority to make decisions and ensure they are fully informed with relevant data to do so. Further, whenever the Bishop does not implement a recommendation of a consultative body, he will provide that body a written explanation of his rationale. Additional recommendations included implementing term limits for each of the consultative bodies and using vacancies to create diverse teams (with members representing the makeup of the Diocese).

B. Establish performance expectations and goals for the Bishop which will be regularly reviewed by the Faithful

We recommend that a consultant body should be used to assist the Bishop in articulating his responsibilities with time bound goals which will be published on the diocesan website, along with progress toward goals and corrective action.

C. Apply sound organizational practices to all key processes in the Diocese

The Bishop should immediately engage Leadership Roundtable and commit to leading the necessary culture change to move our Diocese forward and to working with Leadership Roundtable to put in place a mechanism to regularly assess progress against the commitments made in concert with the Movement to Restore Trust. Priests must be provided a mechanism to have a voice and be heard.

D. Ensure laity access to and regular interchange with the Bishop

The periodic report to the Pope by the Bishop is an opportunity for this access and regular interchange and input from the faithful. “Real time” information about what is happening in the Diocese as well as progress against defined metrics is consistently shared with the Faithful. The laity and clergy should have access to the Bishop through transparent mechanisms for regular communication.

¹ N.B. Other groups had recommendations similar in foundation (see 1.F, 2.A, 2.E, 3.A, 4.A, 4.B, 5.D). The prominence of the appearance of this theme, given the fact that the groups worked independently of one another) was notable.

Group 4 - Lay involvement in selecting and monitoring bishops

A. Input from the laity on Diocesan Leadership

Input from all the faithful, before a Bishop is assigned to a particular diocese should be reinstated to enable a better matching of shepherd to the needs of the diocese's clergy and laity.

B. Process of Nomination of Priests for consideration of Ordination to Bishop

The institution of a consultative process for nominating priest names by clergy and laity would create another resource to be considered by the Pope.

C. Bishop Tenure

The adoption of tenure requirements would strengthen the role of the laity in addressing the corporal needs of the faithful, continue to create a transparent environment and allow the Bishop and clergy of the diocese to focus on their role as shepherds.

D. Evaluation/Review of Bishop Performance

Establishment of a process of independent evaluation and recommendations to provide feedback to the Bishop and to the diocesan faithful of the "state of the diocese" would bring additional transparency and affirmation on the "performance" of the diocese under the control of the Bishop.

E. Establishment of an independent process of reporting misconduct or impairment

The recommendations contain references to voluntary processes for reporting already put in place in the Dioceses of Chicago and Jefferson City and strongly recommend that the DOB institute something similar.

F. In addition, Workgroup 4 notes that there are problems with the **Bishop's lack of actual accountability to the recommendations of Diocesan Consultative Bodies** and the lack of an "appeal" process for any of these bodies.

Group 5 - Greater involvement by women/laity in the Church

A. Renewal of Vatican II Theology and Ministry throughout the Diocese

We recommend that the Diocese initiate an education process flowing from Vatican II for parishes, organizations and the Seminary to renew the People of God (both laity and clergy) and enhance the understanding and appreciation of our common call to holiness and the complementary roles of clergy and laity in the life of the Church.

B. Increased Roles for Women

Empower more lay women to prepare for and take on lay Ecclesial Ministries and invite qualified women to have active roles in leadership and decision-making, both at the diocesan and parish levels. Support the restoration of the Permanent Diaconate for Women in the Church, should the US Bishops Synod initiate this restoration.

C. Support for Inclusive Parish Life

The Diocese must provide a process for direct communication between parishioners and bishop, with a goal to have the key stakeholders in each parish collaborate with the bishop for the purpose of assessing and evaluating the effectiveness and efficiencies of ministries, thus creating an outcomes-based and inclusive foundation for decision making.

D. Shared Governance

The Diocese should consider a new shared governance model for parishes and the diocesan central administration.

Group 6 - Improvements in formation of priests and priestly life

A. An added focus on the "human" pillar within seminary formation

We recommend several ways in which the Seminary could increase its focus on the Human pillar in the formation process. We also think that the Diocese should consider relocation of the seminary to an urban setting, perhaps to a college campus.

B. Transparency and accountability in psychological services

We recommend several enhancements in providing psychological services in the formation process.

C. Continued formation and accountability for our current and future priests

Require priests to participate in continuing education and be accountable for having done so; identify competent and confidential resources to assist clergy in self-care, psychological and emotional health and general well-being; further enhancement of the program that trains for homiletics; focus on a leadership model which recognizes that he who would be first must be the last and the servant of all.

D. Integration of priests into parish and family life as well as safeguards against isolation and the establishment of unhealthy ways of relating

We recommend: (1) a more communal model of living for priests; (2) providing additional resources for parishes to manage the “business” of the church so that priests may focus their time primarily on their gifts, multi-dimensional business, organizational, human, spiritual, and pastoral tasks of parishes, with full participation of women; (3) that parish communities make deliberate efforts to integrate a priest into the church community through socializing, and invitations into homes amid families.