

## **2018 Guardian Angels Listening Sessions**

### **The Time is Ripe For the Faithful**

Goal: To create forums for parishioners of Guardian Angels to share their thoughts and suggestions about the crisis in the church.

The major themes that emerged:

#### **PAIN, ANGER, AND FRUSTRATION**

##### **“The church has let us all down.”**

- The archdiocese continues to look after the reputation of the church, at the expense of the people.
- The church must clean this up – this has gone on too long. There doesn't seem to be an end in sight.
- The crisis shook our foundation. We have no idea how all of this will turn out for the church.
- We thought this had been addressed. The leaders decided not to fix it. We can't follow the hierarchy blindly anymore.
- Where is the outrage? Let's act with urgency.
- Secrets keep us sick. We need the truth. The church hasn't changed, it's up to us to do something.
- Young people don't like the rules of the church – common sense is missing (e.g. no marriage).
- This is why our youth don't want anything to do with the church and the priests.
- So many feelings of anger, sadness, betrayal, and helplessness. We are powerless.
- How can we believe if we can't trust? We've known too many priests that are abusers.
- I would walk away from the church if it wasn't for Guardian Angels. Many others are considering leaving the church.
- We must remain vigilant and make sure that a band aid is not placed on these wounds.
- This will take monumental change.
- We can't allow Guardian Angels to be ruined by the actions of the hierarchy.
- Seminarians don't seem to embrace the real world, including how to understand and respect women.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT THE VICTIMS**

##### **“We must help those that are suffering.”**

- There needs to be more disclosure and follow-up on past allegations, we must support victims at our parish.
- The church does not police itself well. We must seek justice and healing for all victims.
- We need to feel confident that past and future transgressions are exposed to civil authorities.
- How can we heal until the perpetrators are addressed by the legal system?
- There can be no healing until the pain is acknowledged.
- We must convince parents to listen to their children. Lawsuits and settlements don't take away the pain.
- The issue goes deeper than the clergy. The family often knows.
- Things happen but nobody talks.

#### **TRANSPARENCY**

##### **“Trust and hope are not possible without transparency.”**

- There should be an outside review of the crisis, and the sharing of the all facts.
- We need to hear a summary from our pastor, archbishop, and leadership of where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going as both a local entity and an international church.
- People need to understand the archdiocese's plan to prevent these occurrences in the future.
- There should be a consistent, open, honest message and a measurable response to heal.
- Secrets keep us sick.
- People feel like nothing is being done.

#### **LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN CHURCH LEADERS**

##### **“Lay people demand reform. A lack of accountability can no longer be tolerated.”**

- The hierarchy is not trusted, there must be a change in the balance of power.

- The church is slow to change because the hierarchy wants to protect themselves. They have their own rules.
- We see that it is our responsibility to do something, since clearly the hierarchy cannot or will not. A solution must be from the bottom up, top-down hasn't worked.
- Major reform is needed, the hierarchy covers for each other, priests that abuse need to be flushed out.
- There can no longer be a blind following – there is a parallel between the unpunished illegal activities of the church, and the decline in Catholic membership and participation.
- Imperfect people preach God's word and need to be subject to checks and balances.
- Laity needs to exercise leadership in our church and the Archdiocese

## **REPAIR AND BUILD**

### **“We don't need to destroy the church, let's fix it!”**

- Create the proper checks and balances. This must be a grassroots effort, and must start now.
- Insist on bottoms up participation with zero tolerance.
- We need a massive culture change to address the sexuality challenges of priests.
- Lay people need to be much more involved. The involvement must be more than just a voice that goes nowhere.
- Consider making lay people in charge of the church.
- Lay people should be permitted to preach.
- The challenges are well beyond Guardian Angels and the bigger picture must be addressed.
- If wrong-doers don't have consequences, there will be no change. Define and implement ramifications.
- More priests are needed. Priests should be allowed to marry, and women should have the opportunity to serve.
- Recruit potential priests from those that are widowed or divorced.
- Women should be involved in the solutions in general. They should participate in a changed hierarchy.
- In the real world, the proper solutions come from customers (parishioners) and employees. The church must listen and adapt to the people it serves.
- We need to better understand what the priests are being taught at the seminary, and influence the training appropriately.
- We must strive to involve young people in our solutions to keep our church community alive and growing.
- We may need to rely on open dialogue with other Christians – all have challenges, but we can learn from our greater community.
- We need to ensure that we are supportive of the innocent priests, we don't want to lose them.

## **COMMUNICATION IS A MUST**

### **“Open communication and transparency are a must.”**

- We need to be bold, truly reflect the needs of the parishioners, and keep the communication open. This cannot be the last step.
- Create frequent and consistent communication opportunities for parishioners.
- There should be more emphasis on open dialogue.
- We need to hear a consistent message at mass.
- Parishioners are appreciative that leadership has provided an opportunity to express their thoughts and suggestions.

## **HOPE AND FAITH IN GOD AND HIS CHURCH**

### **“The church will be cleansed, it will be stronger.”**

- Humans have failed us over the years, but the church is more than those people. The church will get through this.
- Guardian Angels needs to be a moral compass. The church needs to be fulfilling a need.
- We may need to rely on open dialogue with other Christians – all have challenges, but we can learn from our greater community.
- Guardian Angels is welcoming, we stay with the church because of our community.
- The crisis has not affected my relationship with God.
- Our faith is deeply rooted, the church will survive.
- We need to support our pastor and staff.