

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **National Working Group on Catholic Sexual Abuse Crisis Makes Bold Restorative Justice Proposals to U.S. Bishops**

Notre Dame, Nov. 9 2022—In September 2021 and 2022, approximately 25 participants gathered for two national consultations at the University of Notre Dame and the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, respectively. They included victim-survivors, advocates, restorative justice practitioners, psychologists, scholars, deacons, priests, and bishops. Both consultations explored whether restorative justice could help bring greater healing to victim-survivors and the broader Church. Centered on restoring right relationship among all the people wounded by an injustice, restorative justice has become a worldwide movement because of its effectiveness. The consultations asked whether lessons for the Church could be found in the restorative justice traditions of Indigenous peoples and the efforts of nation-states such as South Africa, Rwanda, and Canada. Two strong points of consensus emerged: significant wounds remain and the teachings of Jesus call all Catholics to promote holistic justice and healing.

A smaller working group then emerged to develop concrete proposals, listed below. Along with these, we exhort Church leaders to listen humbly to the voices of victim-survivors, including those abused as adults who have not been sufficiently included in the conversation, to understand their specific needs for healing and wholeness. Restorative justice is rooted in the Gospel and animated by the holistic and unifying power of the Eucharist, significantly at a time when the U.S. Bishops have called for a Eucharistic Revival.

- Develop a National Center with experts and practitioners to equip the broader Church in restorative justice, particularly healing circles, to accompany those who have been directly and peripherally harmed by abuse.
- Establish a National Healing Garden as a permanent site of healing, prayer, and accompaniment for victim-survivors of clergy sex abuse and for the broader Church.
- Institute an Annual Day of Prayer and Penance for Healing and Reconciliation for victim-survivors of clergy abuse and for broader healing in the Church.
- Initiate trauma-informed training for clergy, seminarians, lay ministers, lay leaders, and parish communities to communicate the realities and effects of trauma in order to compassionately accompany victim-survivors.

We believe these proposals reflect a synodal Church, which is called to listen to, accompany, and heal the broken-hearted, in addition to being a witness to the broader culture, which suffers from similar wounds. We understand that for many, further measures are needed such as concrete steps toward greater accountability, due process for the accused, and pathways to healing for those rightfully removed from ministry. We offer our proposals after much prayer and dialogue, with hope and openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance on our shared journey of faith.

The working group consists of:

- Fr. Thomas Berg (Professor of Moral Theology, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie);
- Mary Glowaski (Assistant to the Bishop in Pastoral Care, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend);
- Fr. Daniel Griffith (Wenger Family Fellow of Law, University of St. Thomas School of Law; Pastor and Rector, Basilica of St. Mary, Minneapolis);
- Michael Hoffman (Archdiocese of Chicago advocate for healing and prevention; former President of Prevent Child Abuse, Illinois; victim-survivor of clergy abuse);
- Susan Mulheron (Chancellor for Canonical Affairs, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis);
- Daniel Philpott (Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame);
- Emily Ransom (Professor of English, Holy Cross College, Notre Dame; victim-survivor of clergy abuse).

Each of us deeply love the wounded Church and present this in the hope enabled by the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ for the healing of his body.