

**Tuesday, February 26, 2019 7pm in Chapel**

**with Fr. Tom Ferguson, Vicar General of the Diocese of Arlington**

**Agenda:**

- Thanks & introductions
- Fr. Matt is not here tonight because he had previous plans to celebrate a memorial service at Bishop Ireton, so Gerard and I will be your facilitators tonight.
- History of events - this is our 5<sup>th</sup> event.
- We include prayer, updates, questions, discussion, and fellowship.
- We keep an updated news announcement on the website so that all can receive knowledge and can reference what is happening here in the parish, in the diocese and beyond.
- We will stop at 8:15 pm to see where we are and to regroup how much longer we will continue.

**Process & guidelines for asking questions or making comments:**

1. Be respect for all speakers
2. Avoid "speaking over" others
3. Write down your question before hand and come stand in line.
4. Questions or comments should stay on topic of the abuse crisis
5. 2-minute time-frame for questions or comments.

**Rough Notes:**

Approximately 96 people in attendance.

Welcome: Gerard Hall, Director of Liturgy and Opening Prayer

Introduction: Irene Zaso, Director of Communications, gave overview of meetings the last few months and how Fr. Matt Hillyard started this for people to share feelings, ask their questions, get information. Fr. Matt unable to attend due to a schedule conflict. Staff introductions were made as well as noted that information is updated on the website. Explained the new group OLGC ACT - Advocates for Church and Transparency. Plan to end at 8:30. At 8:15, we will see where we are at and decide how to move forward. Fr. Ferguson has a list of questions that we submitted. Guidelines-2-minute limit for questions and comments for Fr. Ferguson. Line up. Stay on topic. Be respectful of one another.

Intro of Fr. Ferguson and invited people to ask their questions, he is here at our disposal and thanks for being invited, has celebrated Mass at OLGC many times and happy to be here with us, with this difficult and challenging topic to gather and discuss. It has been a long 6 months. For me, the issues are a part of my attention and work on a daily basis. It's a challenging time. It's been a long road since the end of June and remembers that day and his feelings. Thank you for the hospitality and will do my best to listen and address and questions.

Parishioner & member of OLGC ACT- Thank you for being here. We all come here for slightly different reasons but what I keep hearing is that everyone loves their Church. This is what motivates us. We want to ask. We are such a talent rich group of people...wealth among the laity...we want to help. We want to know how we can have a voice at the table. ACT meeting on Thursday.

Fr. Ferguson - Many of the things you have said I echo. I am a member of the Church too. We are a people of a lot of talents. We are all looking for a way that we can contribute to our love for the Church and want to do all that we can to work for the integrity of the Church. We are all called to be witnesses to the Gospel. Most importantly to care for the most vulnerable. We welcome every opportunity to be a part of the solution. On a personal level, I share a lot of frustration that the people in this room have. Work towards transparency...I am with you in everything you've said.

Parishioner & member of OLGC ACT - Thank you - Join ACT. Part of the hurt is that a breach of trust has happened. Inviting the laity could help heal that the hurt.

Fr. - The involvement of the laity began 16 years ago. The Church said this has to be the work of the whole people in the Church. We do have the investigation of clergy by laity. We need to do more, but to continue the good work that has already begun. Vatican II-this work includes all the people of God. Crisis brings the opportunity to examine how we can do more. How are we going to include laity in governance and consultation? Questions that have been raised in the last 50 years. In the history of the church, crisis is when things start to turn around...we see the emergence of saints...

Parishioner the last 2 years - I have been listening to what the church does when there are allegations...

Group of survivors how have been abused by priests...SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) Has the Diocese reached out to this group to examine whether the practices we put into place are working?

Fr. - The victims and survivors of sexual abuse, in general, are people that our diocese has regular contact with. Last 2 bishops have been eager to spend time with them, hear their stories, listen to their wisdom to hear what we can do better to respond to their hurt. FF no direct contact with SNAP. Member of this diocese works directly with the members of the group of survivors and victims. Lots of ministry to assist with healing.

Parishioner - Has there been a concrete policy change since listening to the survivors/victims?

Fr - Bishop Loverde took it very seriously what came out of Dallas. Pastoral priority since 2002-robust child protection policy and pastoral care of victims. I can't point to one policy change, it's more been an affirmation that our diocese has made it a priority to reach out.

Parishioner - We're getting a sense of transparency, 0 policy, what were the bishops considering doing when the Pope said wait...why couldn't they informally adopted...what might they have done if they hadn't been constrained. We are looking for more than a listening ear....is the Bishop constrained?

Fr. - Since 2002, the Dallas Charter has placed the responsibility on the bishops for pastoral care and protection of children. Our diocese has been put it out there as a model of Pat Mudd-woman from our diocese working as a counselor...first person to lead the group of victims/survivors...how do you respond the victims and survivors. We have no restraint on what we can do in our diocese. The way bishops have responded in this country varies. Story of friend who is a victim of sexual abuse reached back out to her diocese...no call back...Bishop Loverde spent 2 hours with her and he didn't have any responsibility to do so...on behalf of pastors wanted to reach out to her. My understanding of November was a draft of how to hold one another accountable -the bishops accountable to the pope...I'm also frustrated-didn't catch to what exactly.

Parishioner - What was faulty about the earlier investigations?

Fr. - Just wasn't all published in one place. John James? 2002, 2011, 2018 investigations...nothing new found...we are willing to do and redo whatever we have to do to create for people a sense of confidence that we have done everything we can. Consistency of how cases come to our attention...Most recently, this is the best we can do to put it all in one place with the Diocese of Richmond since some of our priests were ordained in Richmond before 1974?

Parishioner - You mentioned that there are various responses between diocese...the bishops' conduct varies as to how they respond...Dallas Charter...robust and referred to the entirety...points out a problem that exists in the Dallas charter...the charter doesn't hold the Bishops accountable...the bishops exempted themselves...you mentioned that the bishops are accountable to the pope...but he's thousands of miles away...what's Bishop Burbidge's view on this whole in the charter and holding bishops accountable?

Fr. - Yes, he does think that bishops should be held accountable as to how they respond to the abuse in their diocese. There needs to be accountability of bishops to one another to fulfill what the charter demands...what is just and need to respond to victims, protect children, and discipline the clergy who have abused children. Bishops need to lead by example and hold themselves accountable of their own behavior. McCarrick is not the first bishop to be guilty...No canonical way to hold bishops accountable- BB would agree that this is a gaping hole and needs to be addressed. Nothing in place to hold the bishops accountable to anyone but the pope.

Parishioner - How does that happen? How do bishops address this?

Fr. - This is my opinion, not a matter of fact, there was a lot of finger pointing in November...another narrative-bishops had a proposal that has to be reviewed by the Holy See...presented 4 days before...you expect us to approve this in 72 hrs...didn't have enough time to approve of something of that magnitude...asking for more time to do it right...what's the truth? Who's at fault? I am with you. I am the vicar general and I represent the Bishop in a lot of ways and I'm a priest. I am also looking for better leadership.

Parishioner - So the Holy See has the proposal...no they've had it for months...so what happens now?

Fr. - This is my opinion...humanly speaking this could be put on the table in June to be voted on....I don't know the mind of the pope...I think the US is prepared to be a leader in the world wide effort...what the US bishops did in 2002...was only made a policy in other countries like France and Italy this past year...still bishops in other countries who are in denial that this is even a problem....this is going to be frustrating...personally, lower my expectations since it's hard to keep the universal church together

Parishioner a Deacon's widow - Priests and deacons are frustrated as well. Thank Bishop Burbidge and Fr. for being forthright about publishing the names...which included someone I love very much. Here are my frustrations Accountability...still makes me angry about cardinal law who escaped any discipline for his actions Small progress that McCarrick is treated differently. All bishops who have covered up should be held to civil law. I appreciate that our diocese is reporting to the police. Church militant-dog and pony show-liked the general tenor-doesn't give me confidence that the church is going to make the improvements that we need. How are we ever going to prevent this abuse unless we don't know what

causes it? Very difficult to have a discussion on this controversial issue...we are probably not unified on this...need to find a civil way to talk about these issues...need to do the best we can to explore what is driving these impulses.

Parishioner - To me it has been drip, drip, drip since 2002 ...watching the names come out of Boston, Philadelphia...slowly we are seeing parishes...diocese reluctantly publishing names. Me as one of the sheep is skeptical...practicing catholic now but my faith has been shaken...I still don't believe that the bishops have adopted a 0 tolerance policy...my request for you is that the real work is when the bishops go home from Rome to convince brother bishops that this is serious...remove priests...reach out to the victims...only if this happens will the meeting in Rome be a success...we all need a translation from BB on what happened in Rome...these are the issues raised, and these are the steps that are being taken...succinct message from the altar to be read at the parishes...here is what we are doing in Arlington...bishop needs to bring back the sheep...smell like the sheep. Thanks.

Fr - I'm with you. BB is the chair of communication...this is important to him...website...podcast...small percentage...we have to be tireless in our efforts...it's even more local than the diocese...as pastor I can do as much as I can in my parish...I cannot do what I'm doing in the neighboring parish...the bishop is trying to get the succinct message out...this is what I want ppl to hear...have to have accountability of the priests too...what are we doing on the local level...your pastor is a committed pastor...parishioners of other pastors who are not doing this need to find a way for parishioners to hold their priests accountable....FF will pass along to BB to share Rome meeting in multiple medium.

Parishioner of St. John Neumann - Diocese of Arlington was created in 1974...How many found guilty of sexual abuse?

Fr. - 10 diocesan priests

Parishioner - How many turned over to civil authorities?

Fr. - Most of these cases happened before 2002

Parishioner - Any turned over for monetary settlement...

Fr. - have a 100,000-insurance policy

Parishioner - We pay premiums on that

Fr. - Yes

Parishioner - Are any still in ministry?

Fr. - They are not in ministry...their cases have been resolved in different ways...some have cases still pending...laicized...

Parishioner - None are in active ministry?

Fr. - None...they don't even have their faculties to serve as a priest/exercise in unlicensed ministry

Parishioner - Any moved from parish to parish?

Fr. - I can think of one case before 2002, after the priest was undergoing therapy was returned to ministry but then removed in 2002

Parishioner - Catholic for all my life. Left for a while. Teetering on staying, Unless the priests/bishops guilty of abuse/cover up are turned over to the local authorities, I don't see how I can be a part of an organization that puts the organization above the members...

Fr. - Everything you've said, I agree with...Right now a priest is removed from ministry if accused...turned over to the police...

Parishioner - Bishops who stay in their diocese that move ppl around...

Fr. I'm with you...I try to be a person of integrity...we have to have integrity

Parishioner - Shocked to see some of the names...Give the Diocese credit for publishing. Pope Francis made a huge mistake that defrocking McCarrick would please the American people. The Catholic Church needs to do more. What is incardination?

Fr. - Incardination is the relationship between the priests and their diocese...You aren't ordained as a freelance priest or deacon...have to have a connection to a diocese or a religious community...rights and responsibilities on part of the cleric to the entity that they are incardinated...the bishop can't decide to transfer me to another diocese...brings along the responsibility...unless a person is dismissed from a clerical state, the diocese has a certain responsibility for that person...a right to some form of sustenance...

Parishioner - The other question is that we are often concerned about children...Huge scandal about the sisters/nuns who have been abused...What are the bishops thought?

Fr. - Hasn't heard of anything regarding the sexual abuse of nuns in our diocese...Relationships of seminarians...What we are seeing is that we are hitting the bottom...I thought we hit it in 2002...but we are there again...The abuse of minors is not the only issues. There are other issues of misconduct that are being brought to light. I've heard some people give some pretty powerful testimony of abuse that has happened in seminarian formation. I say this as a pastor, as a priest or deacon, we have a code of conduct in relationship to minors. It's time for us as a church to think about our relationship with adults as well. How are we going to renew our efforts of bringing to mind how we are going to treat each other in the work place...Societal now. It does happen and we need to address it. As we talk about empowering lay people, there is also a code of conduct that applies to laity as well.

Parishioner - As a parent of two teenage boys and raising young people in the church...church was my bedrock and formed me...grateful for that...what do I say to my children when they see the church in shambles...no moral authority...they've lost their faith in the church...

Fr. - I'm with you all the way. The last two weekends, I have addressed this personally...my theme of preaching this past weekend was how do we approach forgiveness and reconciliation in light of real abuse...at 4 of the masses, I talked about how we are experience in our world and our church a crisis of leadership...how do we fix that...at the 5 pm mass a group of teenagers...not just we as adults who are feeling this, what about the young people of the church? The church has been a part of my life since I was a conscious human being...I didn't know anything but Catholicism...I am here today because not

only my family but my parishes in NY was where my faith was encouraged...I am with you all the way...is there going to be someone in the next 30 years to take my place...that's where I'm afraid....I believe that God will provide...there will be saints and there will be leaders...but I'm afraid...this is what we talked about as a parish staff...they have children...fear is a legitimate thing to talk about...how are we going to be witnesses to convince teenagers/young people today that this is worth what we dedicate our lives to...there is a crisis in leadership/credibility...the saint I've been going back to is St. Francis of Assisi and I say that because you know the story of the cross that spoke to St Francis to rebuild the church....was the church that is the people of God. We have to look at St. Francis and ask how are we going to rebuild the church? I would like to have a policy that holds the bishops accountable...but that's not within my power...what can I do? Be the best pastor I can be...share thoughts with Bishop Burbidge...serenity prayer....I fear that I don't see the level of commitment at every parish that I see here...as far as I know, gatherings like this have only happened in less than 6 parishes...Good Shepherd, Nativity, St. Mark, St. Leo, OLGC, St. John Neumann...there =have to be committed lay leaders too...not every parish has gathered like this...even in a diocese like us with a commitment to child protection, etc.

Parishioner - I commend Bishop Loverde and Bishop Burbidge for their commitment to the protection of children and outreach to victims. It is especially heartening that the number of abusers is very low...they feel comfortable in our diocese that the truth is spoken, and the gospel is lived. Bishops need to look at the diocese that have the most abusers. 81 percent of the victims according to the John Jay study...over 14 male...not pedophilia...bishops need to address this problem...how many priests in PA...I think the bishops conference needs to do a comprehensive study on the diocese that had the most abuse, type of abuse, and correlated with how faithful are the priests in those diocese and how are they reaching the moral truth? And the subject that nobody wants to talk about? Homosexuality in the priesthood...sexual harassment in the seminaries...bishops need to face the facts and talk about...which priests are professing the truth of the faith and calling the faithful to chastity. If you want to restore faith in our church, you have to begin there. The Dallas charter was great but like you mentioned, what happened? The bishops were exempted? Who was the leader? McCarrick...there is a problem of coverup and protection...

Parishioner – says to other parishioner - You are off topic...homosexuality

Parishioner - I'm sorry...look at the 81 percent from the study...the sexual abuse is so deep...it's so harmful...it's not like a broken bone? I don't think the bishops understand how truly incomprehensible sexual abuse is...and if they did, I think they would hold themselves accountable....

Parishioner - wonder if you would share with us what you are going to take back to the bishop...

Fr. - I would repeat to him. Committed parishioners dedicated to their faith and have strong feelings who are looking for strong leadership...People are looking to the bishops to be accountable...we always have room to improve but we are doing the best we can to protect children and heal victims. policy for sexual abuse. Dignity of every person.

Parishioner - Underscore that we are looking to have leadership from BB and carry message to Rome to shift

Parishioner - daughter sexually assaulted in college and started a nonprofit, Testified in front of congress, Changed laws, Catholic Church is so far behind, Imploring to stop looking inside of your own

organization for solutions, Language is all wrong, Call the priests who were sexually abused perpetrators You are aligning against us. We are the church-the laity and the priesthood...what we are doing is putting the laity against the clergy. Sexual assault is power imbalance? Need the laity and clergy to be against the perps. 4 percent of males are perpetrators. Need to go outside of yourself and to look to other organizations to assist?

Fr. - Repeat my thanks for being here tonight and commitment to addressing these issues. Looking forward to hearing where you go from here. I applaud your consistent commitment. The worse thing we can do is listen and share frustration but have no action to move forward...I will continue to do my part. We need to remember prayer. Responding to a call to holiness that we are all committed to as Christians. Action not inspired by prayer will not take you very far. Evil is a spiritual reality that is going to be addressed anywhere that hope is.

Parishioner - I want to say yes to your offer to continue the dialogue. We want to see change and we have to keep talking about it. There are a lot of people who are already pretty smart about how to fix this in human organization and we should learn from their wisdom. Bishop Burbidge to send support to the parishes that are having these dialogues...General focus from organizations to keep people safe...

Fr. Said he would come back.

Ended the night with a Glory Be.