

Monday, June 3, 2019 7pm in Chapel Evening Prayer

followed by presentation & discussion

with Fr. Lewis Fiorelli, OSFS Provincial or the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales

Agenda:

- OLGC ACT & SJNAG introductions
- Introduction of Fr. Fiorelli
- Fr. Fiorelli opening comments with themes that were previously sent to him
- Panel-style moderated discussion with Kevin Bae & Fr. Fiorelli
- Questions from attendees needed to be written down and collected
- Thank you

Rough Notes:

- Approximately 54 people in attendance.
- Kevin Bae & Joe Demarco - Explained ACT & St. John Neumann Action Groups
 - OLGC ACT - Focus on prevention & accountability
 - SJNAG- Education, support survivors, advocate meaningful participation of Church
- Fr. Matt introduced Fr. Lewis Fiorelli, OSFS Provincial for the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales
- Fr. Fiorelli spoke about items that were sent to him prior.

Fr. Fiorelli - Grateful for enthusiasm of the groups and parishioners. Church has been in crisis before and lay people stepped up noting St. Catherine stepped in, St. Francis of Assisi stepped in, and now two groups step in.

Grateful to the groups, God works through you even though challenging & unsettling.

The state of sex abuse in the Oblate, past & present.

Oblates Mission is to see the special gifts in people. Our charism is the spirit & teaching doctrine of the Gospel and to spread Salesian Spirituality. Oblates use the vehicles of the parishes & schools they administer to share the spirit and doctrine of St. Francis de Sales. The principal element of Salesian spirituality is deep respect & reverence for the dignity of every person of God. Honor & promote the gift of who you are.

The abuse of anybody is a great sin and a serious crime. The actions of others are horrendous, and Oblates have a proactive stance towards this.

Since 2002 Oblates have carefully & faithfully followed all standards recommendations that the Dioceses and Praesidium have. We have accreditation with Praesidium and have been presented with a certificate of the highest standards.

Oblates have been involved in drafting and fine tuning the standards for other major superiors (non-diocesan orders): preventing sexual abuse, responding to allegations in a responsible and transparent way, and supervision of those who have offended (called safety plans).

A partial listing of the 25 standards governing prevention of abuse, responding to allegations, and supervision of offenders:

Screening of candidates

- Initial formation

- Support members
- Boundaries
- Education of members
- Pastoral response
- Education
- Report & work with civil authorities
- Compliance of the 25 standards - others oversee us.

Another document is given to all Oblates “Ethical Code of Ministerial Behavior” by which all Oblates need to abide.

Every summer we come together in Convocation and more training in the prevention of abuse is given. The Assistant Provincial oversees to make sure that everyone is trained.

Oblates differ from Diocesan priests in that we are all brothers and make a vow to the order. If a brother offends, they are still in Oblate Community in vocation but they are isolated from any apostolic ministry and cannot act as priests or do any priestly duties.

How the sex abuse issue has prompted changes in Oblate seminarian recruitment, screening and training.

New members in their seminarian formation receive psychological assessment and background checks. During their postulancy and yearlong novitiate they are introduced to abuse prevention. They learn to be an oblate, what chastity means and follow the rules & procedures of whatever diocese they are a part of. Intense psychological evaluation with director and formation personnel. Determine his readiness and suitability. Celibacy is part of Psychologist follow up with a test and question and answers are gone over with them.

Fingerprints and training happen every time they move to a different location. The church is doing its best to keep tabs on all clergy. Attend Virtus training in whatever diocese they are in.

All postulates review and abide by an ethical code, Director reviews it with them and questions them about it.

Ongoing education with Praesidium has focused on the vow of Chastity. 6 modules of instruction on celibacy include: Sexual identity, skills, limitations, adapt to Salesian spirituality, How to love within the bounds of celibacy, “Conversations that Matter course” from Jesuits includes meaning, vow, theology, stages of psychosexual development, Chastity, importance of intimacy, sexual orientation, skills for successful appropriate boundaries, loneliness, and addiction.

Attend Washington Area Formation Network: ongoing education for those who are in formation 3 years of 6 workshops on sexuality. Gives a lot of direction in the prevention and talks about the abuse crisis.

Emphasis on this critical juncture in our Church, and what he perceives Pope Francis' Vos estis lux mundi to mean for us as a Church.

It is the process to implement so that Bishops are as accountable as priests. Bottom line Oblates take this crisis seriously and we have a victim assistance coordinator

Questions & Answer with Kevin Bae

KB - What do you think is the game changer or what is your expectation going forward hopefully the Bishops will be accountable & transparent.

F - We all love the Church and believe the church is bigger than its leaders.

KB - OLG's own past with the convicted or credibly accused Fr. Robert J. Hermley. Fr. Hermley was a perpetrator and was assigned here. What can you do to make sure that no issues happened here?

F – This happened before 2002, he received psychological help and the 5 standards that were followed, spiritual direction, supervised, forbidden with contact to the school, this was all reported to the Bishop. No allegations have been reported that anything happened here at OLG. February this year the Diocese put out a listing of priests who offended while serving in the Diocese and he name was NOT as on that list. The Oblates have a website that lists all of the Oblates that have offended. <http://www.oblates.org/healing>

KB – Where do the Oblates want to fall within this construct? Jesuits posted their past occurrences and one step further pushed out a communication to reach out to Jesuit communities hunting for victims. Would the Oblates do that?

F – We have chosen not to do that. We encourage people to come forward and have a victim assistance coordinator who is a professional. We feel that there is sufficient notice of receptiveness for them to come forward.

KB - How did Veronica's Veil book come about?

F – Fr. Mark Mealy, OSFS & Bishop Loverde suggested I could give direction to victims. Victims were not ready to forgive. I teamed up with a victim and, together, we gave workshops to both victims and those who minister to them spiritually. My co-author suggested the book with the perspective on how to make one's way back to the Church after abuse. On each topic, she presents the viewpoint of a victim and I respond from the perspective of a spiritual guide in the Salesian tradition. It was a very enriching & humbling experience. I learned how to help, what triggers a victim, boundaries, etc.

Question & Answers:

KB - Did OLG ACT receive a response from letters to USCCB? Kevin responded that they received 2 letters back, and that ACT's letters were forwarded other members.

KB - Have there been credible allegations since 2002?

F – Yes. All but one were about those we already knew about, who are deceased or are already in safety plans. One new allegation was reported and is currently being investigated. He was immediately removed from the parish, no longer serving as a priest and is isolated from apostolates until confirmed or rebutted. It is probable that even if it shows he did not offend no Bishop will allow him to practice.

KB – Has any Oblate wanted to just leave?

F - No Oblate has left or wanted to leave. They stay in their safety plan.

KB – Suggestion - Perhaps Seminarians should meet or interview the accused.

F – Seminarians do interact with them as all Oblates come together in convocation and meet each other in other ways. We care for them like family. It is hard for priests to reach out to victims due to feelings, so now the victim's assistance coordinator reaches out to help victims.

KB – How are laity involved in forming future Oblates?

F - We follow the universal call to holiness to all. St. Francis called all laity to help. He gave St. Jane de Chantal leadership and encouraged laity, holiness & leadership. We have no problem with laity & women. We learn a great deal from laity & women. We greatly appreciate them. The workshops the seminarians go to at Catholic

University are run by men and women skilled in these areas. The seminarians and novices interact with laity wherever they are assigned and learn from them in their work. Oblates are close to Oblate Sisters and Visitation Sisters.

KB – Do you see any problems with the current process either with the Oblates or the Diocese?

F – All Oblates in safety plans continue to be our brothers and they are assigned a supervisor. The plans are given to the Review Board every year to review and determine if there is an issue with a supervisor or an Oblate. In all dioceses that the Oblates are in we see them all as being fully compliant.