



We are approaching a critical and defining moment in our Catholic Church. 250 of our American Bishops concluded a week of prayer in northern Illinois at Pope Francis' request in preparation for a worldwide gathering of Church leaders in February to assertively address the issue of clergy sex abuse. As many of you have seen in his well-publicized letter to our American bishops, which can be found on our website under the USSCB section, Pope Francis has called for transformational change within the Church to address the underlying issues that have enabled both abuse of the vulnerable and the "efforts to deny and conceal" these crimes.

The August 2018 Pennsylvania Grand Jury report served as a necessary reminder of these sins that have plagued our Church and opened the most painful wounds our community has felt since the Boston Archdiocese abuse scandal was made public in 2002. Fr. Matt, as your pastor, shared your outrage and - like many of you - recognized the need to come together as a parish to listen, mourn, express anger and pray. The sentiment from within our community was clear: *We are the Church, and it is our duty to act in love and faith to call for change.* We have witnessed this sentiment translate into action within our parish that has been heard within our Diocese and by leaders within our American Catholic Church. We take this opportunity to inform you of what has transpired at OLGC since the Pennsylvania report and ensure you are kept apprised of future opportunities to add to the growing voices within OLGC who are seeking change.

Two weeks after the release of the Pennsylvania report, Fr. Matt invited parishioners who were concerned to come together for an initial listening session on August 28, 2018, so we could hear each other's concerns and initial thoughts and how to move forward. We followed a month later with a second action-oriented meeting on September 24th during which the group present determined that a petition of OLGC's recommendations for change should be sent to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in the lead up to the annual conference in mid-November. Parishioners broke into working groups to collectively draft portions of that petition, resulting in a final draft that was made available for signing after Masses and in the Parish Office through late October which is available on our website. Many of us met again on October 30th to finalize the petition, which was submitted to the USCCB on November 1st, prompting positive responses from both the USCCB and Bishop Burbidge. It was important for Fr. Matt not to shape the petition's direction, but rather provide the forum through which the OLGC community could voice collective recommendations to the bishops.

We believe our work to affect necessary change within the Church needs to continue. Several of us within our parish family have begun to mobilize to ensure all of us, clergy and laity within OLG, remain cognizant of the key issues underlying this problem. Parish members have also begun partnering with other active communities in our area to include St. John Neumann in order to create a larger voice for change. Our parish's efforts have prompted some to begin to take notice, as you can read about in a recent story featured in the Washington Post and the link is available on our website. In the course of the coming weeks, we intend to ensure you have multiple avenues to stay informed and engaged with others in the parish family who are similarly concerned and working for change. You will begin to routinely see information in our Church bulletin, on our website, and have opportunities after Masses to learn more about how other concerned parishioners are remaining engaged around this critical issue. We encourage you to come and see and ultimately *shape the very change that we seek*.

The newly named group **OLG Advocates for the Church & Transparency (OLG ACT)** will be holding its **next meeting on Thursday, January 31st at 7:30 pm in the School Library**. OLG ACT has mobilized to educate and engage our community to call for an ongoing and transparent response to sexual abuse within the Church, and invites you to come and be part of this growing voice within our parish! Contact Kevin Bae at kbae7223@gmail.com to be included in the email list.

“Brothers and sisters, ask the Lord for strength to fight for our Catholic Church, to lead and never think of leaving the Church. Do not abandon Jesus because of Judas. Do like Saul who became Paul called by Jesus to proclaim his Church in our lives.” - OLG Parishioner