



The National Association of Vocation & Formation Directors (NAVFD)

October 2018

TOWARD LIGHT: STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ABUSE

As further revelations of sexual abuse of children and of persons in vulnerable positions, perpetrated by clergy, religious and others in positions of leadership in the Church are reported, the Board of the National Association of Vocation and Formation Directors (NAVFD) issues the following statement.

We stand with the victims of sexual abuse in their pain and in the profound suffering they continue to carry throughout their lives.

We recognize, identify with and share in the pain, anger and frustration of those who truly live the Gospel and who love the Church with integrity.

We accept the challenges, invitations and responsibilities that arise in light of the abuse as we continue to live out our mission of vocation and formation ministry in the Church.

We acknowledge that apologies, while expressed sincerely and with deep remorse, will never be adequate in this horrific context. Action now and in the future is absolutely necessary.

Therefore,
We hold perpetrators and those complicit in covering up abuse morally and legally accountable;

We cooperate fully and truthfully with those who are responsible for ensuring accountability and those who report it with integrity.

We commit to participating in a new culture of respect, care, integrity, accountability and transparency beginning with ourselves and within the wider Church and society.

We promise with truth and sincerity to stand with the victims of abuse, to support those desiring to live out their faith and their particular vocation fully and with integrity.

We participate in and will continue to support and assist in the development of best practices for the assessment and screening of candidates to religious life and to holy orders and for positions of lay leadership in the Church.

We commit to education, training and formation (in partnership with others as necessary) for vocation and formation ministers and leaders as we continue our work and in the evolving development of our mission and ministry.

We will support our colleagues who are responsible to ensure that only mature, healthy and integrated adults are admitted to seminaries, religious communities and leadership programmes.

We will continue to provide and to develop opportunities for those working in religious formation to develop their role in walking with others as they mature humanly, sexually, healthily and spiritually in their respective vocations.

Above all, we will be women and men of prayer and action for the healing of victims of abuse, for personal integrity and for the healing of Church within society as we move forward in the hope that marks human existence and Christianity. We will, at all times endeavour to be all that we are called to be: "Salt of the Earth and Light of the World" (Matthew 5: 13-16).

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VOCATIONS: TOWARDS THE FUTURE TOGETHER

from the presentation by Bishop Frank Caggiano at the J.S. Paluch Vocation Seminar, Aug 2018

What brings us here today is precisely our love for and desire to serve young people as they discern the Lord's call in their lives, especially those who are discerning a vocation to consecrated life, diaconate or priesthood.

The practice of spiritual discernment, never an easy one in any age, have become far more challenged in our contemporary world for obvious reasons, including the fast pace of life, the growing options that prosperity affords (i.e., the choice of the "good" versus the "better," the psychological and even physiological effects of technology, the militarization of social media and the changing face of diocesan ministry itself.

If we wish to be of help to young people in the need to discern their vocations, we must "understand these factors and their influence.

We are here not to wring our hands and fret about the future: That is a waste of time! We are here to become agents of help for all young people who wish to discern the vocation God is calling them to and in a special way support and accompany those who wish to embrace a vocation to consecrated life, diaconate or priesthood in a healthy, holy, and joyful manner.

However, allow me to be clear when I say that from my perspective as a diocesan bishop, my desire is not to have many vocations at any cost so much as it is to seek good, holy, healthy vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life

I turn to the wisdom that my mother taught me: "The work of ninety-nine good priests cannot undo the damage caused by one "bad" priest." The same is true for religious and deacons.

The damage to trust, ministry and the mission of the Church due to the failures of those entrusted with the care of God's people proves how correct my mother was!

For what the Church is desperately in need of are men and women who are:

1. Persons of integrity "comfortable in their own skin" and capable of living an authentic moral life and true inner freedom
2. Persons who are open to grow in his or her relationship with Christ through prayer, reflection and contemplation in and through His Mystical Body, the Church
3. Individuals who are able to proclaim the Gospel in word and witness and who desire to deepen their faith through study of theology, philosophy and the sciences. They must be capable to answer the burning questions of our age honestly and competently. For as we shall see, it is this inability to answer these questions that continues to drive away many young adults from the Catholic Church
4. Persons competent in the pastoral skills that can be an effective minister of the Gospel, according to his or her other state in life. For in an age that is suspicious of all institutions, it is imperative that our claims of being a people of mercy, love and forgiveness be matched by our actions, especially among the leaders of the Church

My point: Such men and women are there, all around us, striving to do the Father's will. What is essential is that they are supported in their ability to hear, respond and persevere in the discernment of what God is asking them to do. They must be supported to have the religious imagination and courage to dare to consider what God is asking of them.



YOUTH SYNOD

What a gift to the Church was the recently completed Synod on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment!

Over the next months in this newsletter, sections related to the Synod will be included for pondering and action. This section is taken from America: The Jesuit Review, written by Gerard O'Connell and published in americamagazine.org on Oct. 27, 2018:

What the Final Document Says:

The final document takes as its paradigmatic text the Gospel story of the meeting of Jesus with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24, 13-35), and it emphasizes what has been the mantra of this synod: "Young people want to be heard." It recognizes that "many" young people feel the adult world, both

secular and in the church, do not do this, and there is "a lack of attention to their cry, in particular to those who are the poorest and



most exploited." The text speaks against providing "pre-packaged answers" and emphasizes the importance for pastors to listen to young people and to prepare persons "to accompany" them.

The final document endorses the need for greater decision-making roles for women in the church and says "young people have asked for

a greater recognition and appreciation of women in society and in the Church." It recognizes that "many women play an irreplaceable role in Christian communities, but in many places it is a struggle to give them a place in decision-making processes, "even when these processes do not require specific ministerial responsibilities." It declares that "the absence of women's voice and point of view impoverishes the discussion and journey of the church, and removes a precious contribution from discernment." The synod recommended to "make everyone more aware of the urgency of a necessary and inevitable change, also starting from an anthropological and theological reflection on the reciprocity between men and women."

LANDSCAPE OF RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS IN CANADA

NEWSLETTER REPORT – OCTOBER 2018



Greetings from the team of the "Canadian Vocations to Religious Life" research!

We will dedicate this

fall to implementing a communications strategy geared to spread the results of our research far and wide. Our hope is to ensure that religious congregations, as well as other religious organizations, obtain updated information about vocation animation applicable to their

contexts. This information will allow religious congregations to better understand the changing reality of vocations to religious life and to develop appropriate ways to minister to those discerning in today's world.

We plan to accomplish our communications goal by distributing a series of accessible materials that explain our research findings and highlight our key learnings, conclusions, and recommendations. Simultaneously, we plan to publicize these findings through diverse media outlets and academic publications. If you have any suggestions of regional or local

media channels - or any other organizations that should receive information from us - please do not hesitate to contact us.

Before the end of September you will be receiving some of these materials together with the information on how to access the complete research reports. In the meantime, if you have any questions, or would like to find out more about our research results, please contact me at navfd.research@gmail.com.

We ask for your prayers and support as we conclude this important project. Fall Blessings!

Héctor Acero Ferrer, Project Manager