

## **Fordham Center on Religion and Culture**

### **Reckoning and Reform: New Horizons on the Clergy Abuse Crisis**

#### ***The 2019 Russo Family Lecture***

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113 West 60<sup>th</sup> Street | New York, N.Y.

***Moderator:***

**Kerry Robinson**

*Founding Executive Director, National Leadership Roundtable*

***Speaker:***

**Hans Zollner, S.J.**

*President, Centre for Child Protection, Gregorian University, Rome; member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors; licensed psychotherapist*

**DAVID GIBSON:** All right, folks. If you could find your seats again, we're going to reconvene for the second half of our symposium, Reckoning and Reform.

In the first half we reckoned, as it were, with the scope of the abuse crisis. Now we want to focus on the push for reform in the Catholic Church for solutions, and we're again privileged and honored to have a man who has been at the center of this issue for many years and, of course, never more so than in the past year.

Father Hans Zollner is the President of the Centre for Child Protection at the Gregorian University in Rome. It's a post he has held since 2010, and he has overseen tremendous growth in that center's work, a center that focuses on educating laity and clergy around the world on safeguarding practices. He has done this with precious few resources and little staff even as the demand for his services and the work of the center has grown exponentially.

I take this moment just to commend to you the Gregorian Foundation, which supports the work of the Gregorian University and Father Zollner and his center. If you want to do something to make a difference in this battle for reform — and I know so many people feel so helpless — if you want to do something to make a difference for protecting children, you can do no better than supporting the Gregorian Foundation, which has helped us in bringing Father Zollner here from Rome.

Father Zollner, a German Jesuit, or I think as he would stipulate, a Bavarian Jesuit — I guess they have issues like we do — is in addition to his work at the Gregorian a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and a consultant to the Vatican's Congregation for the Clergy. He holds a doctorate in theology and is a licensed psychologist and psychotherapist, and he was a chief organizer of the recent Vatican summit on the protection of minors in the church, held at the Vatican between February 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

Father Zollner travels extensively. He has an incredibly busy schedule as he pursues his mission, and we're grateful to have him here to share his thoughts on that recent summit, on his work, and on what the church needs to do and where we need to go in the future.

Following his talk, we'll again have a moderated discussion, this time with Kerry Robinson of the National Leadership Roundtable, and we will field some of your questions a little more intentionally this time. As Father Zollner is speaking, please again write legibly and succinctly on the index cards — if we can't read them, we can't ask them — and be sure to pass them down to the end of each row, and we and our student assistants will collect them, and I'll screen them and hand them to Kerry to ask to contribute to the discussion with Father Zollner.

Father Hans, over to you.

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** [Slide] Good evening.

**AUDIENCE:** Good evening.

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** It is deeply consoling that heads of university centers learn fast, so David has learned from yesterday to today that I am not a German; I'm a Bavarian. [Laughter]

We have some forty minutes or so for my presentation, and then we will engage in a conversation. As you can imagine, I would be able to talk a lot about this issue, and there is a lot to be said, but not only because of the limitations that all of us have but also because of the necessity to focus on the most important things, I would hope that we can have some time later also for exchange and discussion.

[Slide] My presentation follows this very interesting piece of research that my colleagues from John Jay have presented so convincingly. I'm really glad that I can build on that presentation that shows the situation in this country, in my country, Germany, in Poland, and in other parts of the world.

We talk about new horizons. New horizons means that something has changed. When I'm following news from the United States and from other parts of the world, the situation has changed over the last fourteen months dramatically with regard to this issue, and I'm very well aware that especially in this country and also in Germany I can say that the situation has grown really difficult for the institutional church because people are not only deeply worried, deeply disgusted, and disappointed about the misbehavior of priests or other clergy who have abused, but there is this new element that has come about especially over the last fourteen months I believe that brings about a sense of betrayal and concerns regarding leadership who has not abused but was negligent in dealing with abuse and has covered up more or less actively and has obfuscated information.

When I follow news from Catholic sources and debates and the usual Twitter wars that are going on in the blogosphere and in other areas I get the sense that many people — and I would say to some extent the Catholic Church in this country — is in some state of what Saint Ignatius, our founder, has called “spiritual desolation.”

With spiritual desolation Saint Ignatius describes in the Rules for Discernment of spirits in the exercises the state of the soul in which there is a decrease in faith, hope, and love, and there is a decrease in trust, and there is a decrease in orientation.

I feel — forgive me if I am so blunt — that much of the anger, much of the anguish, much of the depression, much of the deep disappointment that many of us feel remains there and is brooding there and is sort of self-enforcing with every new news about another allegation, another cover-up, another bishop, another grand jury report, and so forth. It is looming there.

My perception is that it is not really getting out of that state of the soul, of that mood, and does not produce much in terms of proactively using that energy for something different. Because I think all of us — very interesting point made by the two colleagues from John Jay before — we are much more formed also by the context and the mindset with which we have grown up and in which we are.

One of my main points is that we are at a breaking point in church history, and the symptom that we see, a symptom of a disease and the symptom of this huge crisis, is a symptom of something deeper, and that has to do with the relationship of faith and belief versus our relationship to the world, and that translates to where do we find God today as Christians in this world, in a changed world, completely different communication world to fifteen years ago, economy completely changed, political systems destroyed and changing, and we carry on with our Christian responses, liberals and conservatives the same, as if we had no idea what God is asking us in this very moment.

This is not a new situation, but the words that we read this morning in the readings and during Mass may resound in us as the invitation to rethink where we are, who we are as church, as faithful, as lay leaders, as deacons, priests, and bishops, as church in our mission.

In the Book of Daniel, the reading of today, it says, “Azariah stood in the heart of the fire, and he began to pray: ‘Oh, do not abandon us forever for the sake of your name. Do not repudiate your covenant. Do not withdraw your favor from us for the sake of Abraham, your friend, of Isaac, your servant, and of Israel, your holy one. Lord, now we are the least of all the nations. Now we are despised throughout the world today because of our sins. We have at this time no leader, no prophet, no prince, no place where we can offer you the first fruits and win your favor, no holocaust, no sacrifice, no ablation, no incense. But may the contrite soul, the humble spirit, be as acceptable to you as holocausts of rams and bullocks. Such let our sacrifice be to you today, and may it be your will that we follow you wholeheartedly. Since those who put their trust in you will not be disappointed, do not disappoint us.’”

Did you hear ever a prayer in all the years that we are talking about these issues as strong as these words from 3000 years ago?

Where we are, that is something that needs to bring about change, but change rooted in our experience, truthful to our present state in which we are because this is the point of departure for everything, truthful to our search for God and for the possibility to look out for something new because this is obviously a situation that we need to face and not hide, neither in denial nor in depression and anger.

This situation is new first and foremost because of one element that was also mentioned in the presentation before. For the first time in the church language and the church documents and the church awareness we talk about “systemic” elements openly, and who was it who put it on the agenda? The pope himself, starting with his mistake, his “grievous mistake” as he himself called it, in Chile at the end of January, calling

allegations against one priest slander and then retracting that and sending Monsignor Scicluna to investigate the cases.

After having read through the 2500 cases with seventy testimonies of victims he sends a letter to the Chilean Bishops Conference and says: "I ask you, my brothers, I ask you to look into the ramifications and the co-responsibility of the whole Chilean church. Why could it last so long, the abuse, and why could it be covered up for so long?" Number one.

Number two: The grand jury report, and with due credit to all of the explanations of its enormous limitations and faults, but taking only this point, speaks eloquently about the continuous cover-up of cases of abuse by numerous bishops in the six dioceses over the last seventy years.

The pope responds to that report, published on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, with the Letter to the People of God on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August. In this letter there is one sentence that has changed my perspective as to how we need to look at the whole issue and how we need to address it also in the context of the whole church. This sentence is: "Sexual abuse is always connected to abuse of conscience and abuse of power." This is a sentence that had never been said by any high-ranking church official, let alone the pope himself.

Second element, where he put the institution on the table for evaluation.

Third element: In the address to the Curia, to the Roman offices, just before Christmas, he again addresses phenomena like clericalism, like inability to really face reality, and this as an institution, or in that case the institution that is, at least to some extent, responsible for the leadership of the universal church.

Finally, the letter of Pope Francis on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January this year to the U.S. bishops before they went on retreat to which he had kindly invited them. [Laughter]

Took a second, right? Yes.

Reminding them of two things. This is your responsibility. You have to really make sure that you understand the issue and that you act on the issue consistently.'

Second, it is your common responsibility. He likes to talk about synodality as a model of common understanding and discussion and taking responsibility together. And it seems as if these were new words because we have become accustomed to the fact that bishops act as if they are alone in the diocese with regard to other leaders and the faithful in that diocese but also as if they were alone leaders of the Catholic Church and there were no neighboring bishops and there was no bishops conference.

For me 2018 was a year of change, and it is very important to realize that we are at another level of awareness.

I connect this also to societal changes like the Me Too movement and the fact that finally the gods of sport and the gods of film were thrown down from their thrones. And the same happened with the cardinals. The untouchables have become touchable and are facing prison sentences. This was not the same two years ago. Remember?

I'm here also to speak about the situation worldwide. I am a representative of, yes, a Western country but a country that has been dealing with this issue for exactly nine years and two months. In Germany the wave was set off, the tsunami, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January

2010. Yes, before there was news; yes, we knew about Boston, but it didn't touch us. It was far away. The Atlantic is broad.

Why only then? I can't explain it. But only then in Germany, in Central Europe this issue became a real number-one priority for media and for the faithful. Before that it wasn't there.

And I can tell you — I've been traveling to sixty countries over the last years on six continents — that this is still the case in my estimate about 75 percent of countries.

It's not that there are no cases of abuse, and the bishops know, and the religious superiors know. It's not that they are not often unreported. But it is not a number-one issue neither in society nor in church.

This is something very difficult to convey to an audience like yours, who have been dealing as we have learned since 1985 with this topic, and you are fed up and you think, *When is it over?*

What I say to the persons with whom I work is, "This will not be over in our lifetime," at least in countries where they have not yet started to talk about it, and believe me, this is the great majority of countries.

Yes, they read news; yes, they follow the developments. But it is as if you are watching television. It's out there.

That's particularly true for some parts of the world where there are other forms of sexual violence against children that are destroying the future of children: child labor, child soldiers, lack of education, no functioning health system, and no functional safety on a state level.

What I would like to say is that I have seen over the last let me say four to five years and I have seen in the last two months since the meeting of the presidents of the bishops conferences and the religious superiors on child protection took place from 21 to 24 of February a change in the awareness among the leaders of those churches that have not yet dealt with the issue.

I would say for me the meeting in February was partly a success because it brought about some kind of unity for the whole church leadership that was present on this. It is an issue that needs urgently to be addressed. We shall not run away, and we have to work together because we understand that this is affecting the whole church.

If you ask me how much that awareness has grown, I would say if the level was here, the general level of awareness and willingness to engage, it may be now here, in the average. If we consider that the United States and Ireland and Australia, maybe Germany, is already here, it looks like going back. Conceded.

But even those who have been here understood a little bit more about the necessity to bring the whole church onboard, which is I believe the Holy Father's serious interest.

I am disappointed about the final message by the pope because it did not highlight what could have been said also about his own attitude, also because I believe still the church doesn't communicate what is going on very well, as we have heard. The numbers of new allegations are consistently low. They will always remain at that level because we won't

do away with the evil, but at least it works. But nobody is easy to understand that and is fast to understand that.

So, how do we face this situation in which trust has been shattered and for some destroyed? You cannot say: "Hello, I have done a revision of my guidelines. Now you can believe me and trust me again." Trust doesn't work like that.

Trust is built up over time. It needs to be verified, and especially with people who have been so deeply disappointed it is very difficult to rebuild trust.

Trust can only be rebuilt with two elements: One, as consistent and sober continuing the work that we are doing in safeguarding as well as in finding new ways of meeting and listening to survivors.

Second, trust needs to be built also by engaging with the heart. What is so striking for me in your country as, for example, those in Australia and nowadays also in Germany, is this: You have together with a few other countries the highest standard you can wish for in terms of church personnel trained, volunteers trained; you have enormous sums of compensation paid out; you have a climate where now abuse is reported much more easily than before; the highest standard of what you can have at the moment in the world.

And still people are so angry and so disappointed. How come? The same is true for Australia.

When I was in Australia over the last three years three times I'm amazed that people say, "Bishops don't get it." And I was always wondering, *What does that mean?* Because on paper you see all is in place. They could not do more possibly, and people who work in safeguarding or in professional standards are worn out because it's never enough. It's never enough.

You can fill into the void as much work and as much money as you wish. It's never enough, and people suffer from safeguarding fatigue. They can't do any more.

I hear journalists here saying: "I can't stand it anymore. I want to write about something nice."

What is it? What is lacking? I would say what is lacking is the communication of the heart because once you believe that a person means what he says, and the heart is palpable, is in the words and in the deeds, then you trust that we are going forward.

As long as you have the impression that we do what we need to do because we are obliged to do because the press is after us or the judges or whatever, or Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), then, okay, you limit yourself to the minimum of personal engagement, which is much less than what you officially do and provide.

I think that is one of the points for seminary formation, of course, and I'm happy that Sister Katarina is here and the Institute of Psychology at the Gregorian where I teach some sixteen years is providing psychotherapeutic training for professionals in seminaries, so this is where I come from originally.

But this is also a question of not only the initial formation but also the ongoing formation, and the induction of bishops.

You know what a bishop receives as help and support for when he starts his office, his ministry? You know what Rome offers for him? Ten days in Rome, where they are dragged from one office to the other, and they receive information that they probably don't need and won't use, and they don't receive information that would be necessary and helpful. And that's it.

And then you are a bishop in your diocese, and you are alone. That is how it feels for many bishops.

Just as we are here, and one data that you mentioned about the abuse, the average age. In the German study there was a previous publication that compared in a meta study all the other reports that were out there, of course, John Jay and Australia, and so forth. The average age of a clergy abuser according to that data is thirty-nine years, which is fifteen years into priesthood at least at that time, when they were ordained in the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Thirty-nine is fifteen years into priesthood and is fifteen years later than a sports trainer or a public schoolteacher or a family father abuser for the first time on average.

What does that say? Again, it is not celibacy as such, but it is how celibacy is lived out, over time.

I was always advocating for screening of candidates for priesthood and so forth, and the human formation piece, of course, this is necessary, but of late I have come to advocate also ongoing formation for priests and especially as we have seen also from the difference in the numbers of diocesan and religious priests, especially in the diocesan work.

The situation worldwide has reached another level of awareness, but honestly be prepared that we need to face many more grand jury reports from other parts of the States and many more such devastating reports from other countries. This has not yet started.

What can help? I think first and foremost that you realize that we, as we are here, won't do it alone. We need outside help. We need expert advice. We need people who can intervene and counsel what is the next step, and that is very much contrary to our normal thinking because church thinking is, *Outside people don't understand us, and therefore we need to find our resources only within.*

This is very harmful over the time that we have been acting like that because then it is an inbreed, and you know what happens with inbreed. At a certain point diseases develop.

Synodality is one of the keywords for Pope Francis's theology and understanding of the church. What does it mean? It means that we come together as faithful, as clergy, as men and women, with all the competences and with all the expertise that we bring with us, the life experience.

Synodality is a buzzword since Francis has started to use it. It is not an easy task to live it out because synodality is the contrary to the authoritarian approach: "I tell you. You do." This is exactly not what Francis is doing. Maybe sometimes we don't understand very much how he goes about it, but I think in the end he does push us to take more responsibility.

I feel that there is sometimes quite a pushback also from all quarters, from left and right, from laity and bishops, because what does that mean? It means we need to discuss with

each other. We cannot go on with our own mindset.

Second, it means that we need to commit to something. If there is a process, then this process has to be followed through, and I can't say, "If they don't follow my idea, I go away."

Third, it means that you don't know what the result of the process is, and this makes many people I believe in the church very uneasy on the left and on the right, for different reasons, but human beings tend to love what they have always known as it has always been in personal life and in institutions.

The inclusion of lay experts, lay voices, female and male, the inclusion of specific experts who can help us to understand this complex world better, the capacitating people in the pews will be a result of this transformation of process. I'm deeply convinced about that. The church in twenty years, maybe fifty years, will look very different to what we know now.

Also because, tell me what is a priest all about today? What is the core of priestly ministry? This is already very difficult to explain, at least to me, because I will ask you some questions about that.

But then, compare that, what priestly life is today for many in reality, which is so far away from that that is projected or taught or written about, and it has certainly nothing to do with what seminary training looks like today.

I was a seminarian of my home diocese at Regensburg before I entered the Society of Jesus, so I know both worlds. But the seminary life was so cut off from reality, was such an island, such a fortress, that you automatically are imbued with a sense of being different.

What is the difference of being a priest? What are the core essential ministries of priesthood? And what is the core of episcopacy? Is it to be the manager of hospitals, the treasurer of big property? What is it?

Where did this evolve into, and when did it start? It didn't start fifty years ago. It started much earlier.

So again, this is not easy, for none of us, because we don't know where this will lead to in two and five and twenty-five years.

It's interesting to see that despite all the scandals, despite all the difficulties, so many people want the Catholic Church to live out what Our Lord wanted it to be.

Yesterday I met a survivor of abuse who lives in the city. We spoke one hour, and the first sentence with which he welcomed me was, "I'm enraged about this church."

He said further: "It was not the abuse that hurt me most. It was the response of the church authority to that that hurts most today. But I tell you what. I want this church," and he says he doesn't know whether he believes in God or not, "to be more modeled closer to the ideal that Jesus Christ had of the community of believers, and that is the church."

One element of this synodality that we have not yet started to think about, and this is also

my constant nagging at the theologians among us, because there is no theology of abuse in the Catholic Church and in other religions, but the other element is in the synodality piece what is the position, what is the place of victims of abuse in our discernment processes, in our parishes, in our pastoral work, in our dioceses and religious houses and communities? Do we think about that, or is it They and Us?

These three words were the headlines for the three days of work during the meeting in February: First day, Responsibility; second day, Accountability; third day, Transparency.

Responsibility meant as spelling out to the bishops and the religious superiors who were there what they have to do according to church norms and according to the church's indications about the collaboration with civil authorities. This is the personal responsibility.

Second day, Accountability. To whom are you as a bishop accountable? To whom are you, a religious superior, accountable? And how is this defined today and how should it be defined in the future?

Many people don't know that a bishop in the Catholic Church can only be judged canonically by one man in the world, and this is number one, the man in white. This is true in all countries, in all contexts, in all situations. No president of a bishops conference, no metropolitan archbishop effectively has any say about any other bishop. There is only one person who can intervene and can dismiss or sanction, and that is the pope.

Now, if you have 5100 bishops in this world in the Catholic Church, how could he possibly look after all of them? Effectively we need a change here. A change was proposed by the American Bishops Conference at the end of October, and that was rejected to the great astonishment and anger of many in this country and elsewhere, but it was rejected on the simple grounds that it went against current church law. Yes, the proposal went against church law, and you can imagine if you send in a law to the Senate that goes against the Constitution, what they do with that. They throw it out before it reaches there precisely on the point that in that proposal was the idea that lay people would judge bishops, and that is not possible according to canon law today. Sorry about that, but this is the law.

That does not mean that lay people could not be involved in review boards, in selection processes of bishops. It does not mean that they are excluded, rather that they have the right position and the right place to give their input. In the end, it will always be — at least for the time we are around — the pope who will have the last say.

But a model was proposed at the conference, at the meeting by Cardinal Cupich from Chicago in which he mentioned the possibility that the archbishops, what is called in church language the "metropolitans," have a special role in the accountability of their suffragan bishops, of those bishops that are included in that region and are simple bishops and would need to report to the archbishop.

This is another model, another way of decentralizing and allowing another level of first clearance, a clearinghouse at least if we talk about allegations of negligence, of cover-up, or obfuscation.

Finally, Transparency. That was the day when we had Sister Veronica from Nigeria sitting there and calling the pope "Brother Francis" and calling her brother bishops from Africa to account. That gave an impression of where we are moving toward because she

was as frank as you could be on all these issues.

But transparency was also called for by the Mexican veteran Vatican journalist, Valentina Alazraki, who was speaking in very strong terms to that effect: “You, church, have a choice. Either you are transparent in your processes and in your data and in your collaboration with the general public, media, etc., and then there is a model of working together, or we will be your enemies.” That came across very strongly, and some African and Asian bishops and Eastern European bishops were quite surprised about that.

This has been highlighted before. Sexual abuse of minors is first and foremost a power issue. It has, of course, sexual expressions, sexual deviance if you talk about pedophilia, but as we have heard this is a very minor part in the strict sense of the psychiatric definition of pedophilia, an exclusive sexual interest in prepubescent children. That is 3.5 percent or 5 percent, whatever it is. It is very low.

The bulk of all sexual predators among clergy were and are those who have been called “generalists,” who take the occasion, who grab whoever they have at hand because of other needs — to fill in the void of loneliness, to deal with personal issues of any kind, with needs for intimacy.

But almost exclusively they are also connected to the question of power. “I feel powerful.” That is also a key to understand people who abuse minors or people in vulnerable situations because ultimately in a psychological interpretation they don’t feel strong enough; they don’t have self-esteem. Therefore, they need to feel themselves powerful with people, in relation to people who are younger or weaker.

We have already spoken about religious and priestly formation. I don’t need to anything about homosexuality and celibacy because it was mentioned earlier and very convincingly. The data speak for themselves. If 30 percent of all Americans live a celibate life, pointing to priests as strange beings who live this impossible life needs to be questioned at least.

Child protection and safeguarding is the one task I think that we should commit to. The Catholic Church in the United States has done so very convincingly, very consistently, at least on paper and with all the investment. But what we don’t have is this sense of bringing it to every single consideration, making it a priority in all that we do, what we strive for, what we represent, keeping people, and especially the most vulnerable, who are the children of this world, safe, not as an add-on but as an in-built need, an in-built wish, an in-built commitment that comes from the heart and that speaks to the heart.

Thank you.

**DAVID GIBSON:** Thank you very much, Father Hans.

While Kerry Robinson joins him on the dais, a couple of things. Please pass any of your index cards to the end, and we’ll collect those for some questions to ask.

Just to introduce Kerry briefly. She’s the founding Executive Director of the Leadership Roundtable, which along with Father Zollner’s center may be one of the best-kept secrets in the Catholic Church. The Leadership Roundtable is dedicated to promoting excellence and best practices in the management, finances, and human resource development of the Catholic Church.

But the group was formed in the wake of the 2002 abuse crisis and has played an increasingly crucial role in pushing reform, advising the bishops and the Vatican by providing concrete proposals that start with the laity and other experts. I really advise you to go to their website and check out some of the recent proposals that they've been formulating and promulgating.

Kerry is a critical part of that effort, and she wears many hats. We're really happy to have her here to lead this discussion with Father Hans.

Kerry?

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Well, first, Father Zollner, I hope you appreciate how sincerely so many of us value what you are doing at this moment in the church's history. In some ways you are standing in the heart of the fire, and your attentiveness over six continents to sixty countries placing survivors at the center of your care and their families is something that ennobles all of us. You are a great blessing, and we're enormously grateful.

I would normally end with this question, but I'm going to begin because you are a Jesuit.

Given that you have been working so intensely on something so urgent and so heartbreaking, and given that you have just come off this seminal conference of presidents of bishops conferences in Rome, can you tell us what your greatest desolation and your greatest consolation is right now in the work that you are doing?

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** Yes, I can say that the greatest desolation is that in some quarters of the church there is still some kind of not active resistance or fighting but a passive one in acknowledging the situation, acknowledging the hurt of victims, acknowledging the crimes of priests, acknowledging the necessity to clean up, and less resistance to do something for safeguarding.

I have to say that you can explain that. For example, the Central and Eastern European countries are very much in that mood, and you can explain that with the history of communism and the influence of police and psychiatry and media in fighting the churches there. Almost all the bishops who are now in ministry in Poland and in the Czech Republic and in Hungary grew up under communism. So, reporting a priest who has abused for them is like handing over one's own son to the executioner. So you can explain that, but still it is very disappointing and certainly challenging.

The biggest consolations are two things. One is that I am in constant contact with survivors of abuse who write to me, some of them on a daily basis. I'm going to meet one Friday in Toronto, no, on Thursday.

With all the continuous news about abuse and cover-up that we face day after day, they say, "Father, continue, and we pray for you, that you continue." This is a very strong consolation and motivation.

The other point is, having seen, having heard myself and through others how bishops went away after the February meeting, those from Africa or those from Asia, and they said that they had understood something in a very different way and seeing that some of them at least from whom I have news coming back to their countries they have started to move.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Thank you. This next question has to do with the role of the laity. What can we do concretely to accelerate the intentional inclusion of lay leadership, expertise, competencies, decision making, and co-responsibility at every level of the church, even and especially in the Roman Curia, while we wait for canon law to be amended? If you want to focus on women in this context, we will not hold that against you. [Laughter]

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** I did not expect that question from you. [Laughter]

What you can do is you prepare yourself. You make reasonable statements and recommendations. You do your professional work to the best of your capacities, and you will be called on.

This has happened to the two undersecretaries with whom we have worked together in the organizing committee. It is true that it was all for clerics, two cardinals, an archbishop, and a simple priest.

But we had insisted that there should be lay women and mothers on this organizing committee, and in the final minute we got Dr. Gambino and Dr. Ghisoni on the committee with this. They are the number threes, respectively, for the sections of life and of family in the Congregation for Laity, Family, and Life headed by Cardinal Farrell.

It would not have been without Cardinal Farrell. You see somebody who is sensitized and aware of this obvious need. He brings about that change, but of course the pope himself has appointed these two ladies. So there is much more possible than you think canon law allows for because canon law is very flexible.

The Archdiocese of Munich has six sectors in the leadership of the archdiocese, and three of those six sectors are headed by lay women. This is one of the things where creativity is called for and allowed for.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** You spoke of the abuse and misuse of power and rightly naming that at the center of what we are talking about. Would it be advantageous to augment or supplement the John Jay study with a similar study on the abuse and misuse of power in the church and with those findings take a fresh look at how we select candidates for the episcopacy, how we place bishops, how we evaluate bishops and provide the ongoing formation and training?

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** How you would do that would be an interesting question because power is everywhere. As for causes, power cannot be extinguished. Power is always there. Either you have it or I have it, but it is there.

The question is how you educate people in understanding what power is, what they have as power. What is the counterpart is responsibility and accountability.

Of course, the next bigger issue that we have to look into is the use and abuse of power, and I think that has certainly to do with the selection process for candidates to the seminary, to the novitiate, to the priesthood, to religious life, but not only because also lay leaders would need to be held accountable for how they use their power respectively either by denying that power or by exerting it in an inappropriate way.

I'll tell you one story from a country far away from here. I was invited to conduct a workshop for lay leaders in the church for a specific issue where they were also in the

group. It was twenty-five lay leaders, high ranking, high professional, highly renowned people in that society, well-known personalities. And some bishops were present.

My goal in preparing the workshop was after a day we know what will be the next steps, how they are defined, and who is responsible for that from among the participants. And guess what? Some of those really highly qualified laypeople rejected the idea that they would take on responsibility because they realized if they take it on they may be charged with nondelivery, noncompliance. They are at risk for that.

This is what I meant also when I spoke earlier about responsibility and accountability are nice if it concerns the others. But if I'm called into responsibility, then that's another pair of shoes.

I think really again we are in a phase of development where companies, big companies, turned away from authoritarian styles to cooperative leadership models. I believe this is at least to some extent what Pope Francis calls for when he speaks about synodality, but this has also to be translated into every diocese and every religious community and every parish.

Two days ago, I was in Washington at Holy Trinity Parish, Georgetown, and I found at least from outside, at least for the two hours I was there and speaking with them, the lay leaders of the parish council and so forth are very self-confident and communicate that very clearly, and they have their say, and they shape the parish life.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Okay. This is from a member of the audience: What is the church doing globally to alleviate the abuse of nuns, seminarians, and young priests?

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** What she does, what the church does, is what it can do in terms of raising awareness about this and following the rules and the sanctions and the canon law norms that are in place for that.

I believe that when we deal with the issue of child sexual abuse in the way that we have been talking today this has immediate repercussions and consequences for any kind of power issue, and this is also a power issue, male/female, if we talk about religious nuns abuse, seminarians to some extent certainly also.

So the question is: How do we present convincingly an ideal and a perspective in which consistency in one's own lifestyle is not something that you have to promise another time or extra but because it is part and parcel of your conviction, of your discernment, and your life's decision.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** This question also from the audience, and you touched on it a bit in your remarks: Were you satisfied with the February Vatican summit, and concretely what did it do, and concretely what did it fail to do?

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** Yes. I said that I was partly satisfied because I believe it achieved at least my major goal that I had before, raising awareness, and this is very concrete if you look into the lives of people.

I was also amazed to see the congruence in the presentation before when you were speaking about the "long haul" that changing culture needs to succeed. This was a quotation from the previous presentation.

I have to say that the belief that new norms, stricter norms, and other laws would automatically change the behavior of people is a fallacy. You know that you have capital punishment in your country. Does it deter people to kill other people? No, it doesn't.

Okay. You need that law, and I'm the first one to say we need different church law for dealing with abuse and, for example, defining specific punishment for different categories of abuse, which we don't have at the moment. We need the definition of the rights of all parties in the church trial, which we don't have at the moment. There is no definition of this, only very vaguely, and that is why I say canon law is very flexible because very often it is completely unspecific.

But what we need for the change of culture is the change of the attitude or, if you wish, the change of the heart. And that is needed in a country in which you have everything in place like this country, where all the norms and all the legislations and all the obligations are in place.

When I came here I needed to produce a paper from my provincial that says that I'm in good standing and that there are no allegations against me. Otherwise, I could not celebrate Mass here. Just to say, the norm is there.

But would that automatically deter me to harm another person? No. That needs my own attitude and my own conviction.

I think that we got as far as you can get in three-and-a-half days. What it could have achieved much better and I believe it will achieve as a follow-up are very concrete things. A few of them are already ready when we finished, but for one reason or another they were not published, they were not promulgated, among them a law for the Vatican City-State, for reporting a so-called "vade mecum," a guideline for bishops and religious superiors how to deal with what case of allegation, a sort of jurisprudence which we don't have until now.

The task forces that I have been advocating means the deployment of groups of three or four to different parts of the world where we don't have guidelines yet, and we help the bishops conferences to develop them and to implement them. I believe this will be there in, I don't know, two weeks the first and two months the second and maybe five months or eight the last one, but there will be follow-up and there will be concrete measures, and there are enough people who are pushing for that.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** You had mentioned I think 5100 bishops as direct reports to Pope Francis, which from a business standpoint is completely untenable managerially given the other responsibilities he has. It seems as though canon law is being held up as the reason not to attend to that challenge.

How could canon law be changed so that we don't place Pope Francis or his successor in that untenable position?

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** No. This is what we have been talking about with regard to accountability, so there are other models there.

Now, I have much sympathy for the accountability to the metropolitan, Cardinal Cupich's model, but be aware that this is not only about canon law; this is about theology, and this, ladies and gentlemen, goes to some extent against Vatican Council II theology.

Why? Because Vatican Council II theology put the bishop in the privileged place, the single bishop, and did not evolve and really establish a system of functioning not even collegiality let alone synodality. And this is something that goes back to a model of the church of the first centuries, where the metropolitan had an influential role.

When we talk about bishops conferences, these are very recent developments in church history, at least, maybe 100, 150 years or so. With the metropolitan model we go back maybe 1500 years or longer.

But again this would mean changing our theology and this hits here and changing our ways of relating to other people, and that is something deeply entrenched in us. To change that is hard work.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Do we have time for one more? Okay.

You know from our own work over these years that Leadership Roundtable views what we are currently experiencing as twin crises — the crisis of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults and the crisis of distrust of leadership. Attending to one without the other, we would posit, is folly.

Your analysis places survivors at the center of our deliberations, and any plan of action moving forward in terms of recovery and reform is entirely appropriate and just and one of the reasons we are particularly glad to work with you.

On the reform side of it there is a call for a task force or kind of an architecture for action with immediate, mid, and long-term concrete actions. You have called – or the Vatican meeting suggested setting up such a task force, perhaps even by continent. Can you say a little bit more about that and how again committed laity can exercise our baptismal responsibility to be part of these reform efforts in a concrete way?

**FATHER HANS ZOLLNER:** My understanding of the task forces would be as I said at least one per continent with three or four people, one canon lawyer, one psychologist, and one theologian plus a clerk taking notes and writing reports, and so go into one country and prioritizing those who are in bigger need, say they don't have guidelines or they have insufficient guidelines, or for whatever reason the implementation doesn't work.

They talk to the stakeholders. They produce a report in which they propose next steps. They send the report to the bishops conference, to the respective offices in Rome, and they propose how the implementation could work out.

Among those experts, of course I see many laypeople involved in all those capacities. I have a few names that I would propose for that because there are many very qualified people. You would need to call on people who know the culture, who speak languages.

The Catholic Church has 1.3 billion members, and there is enough man and woman power to supply to all kinds of special tasks.

**KERRY ROBINSON:** Thank you again, Father Zollner, for your work and for your ministry. Know that you can rely on our prayers and our advocacy.

Would you please join me in thanking Father Zollner?

**DAVID GIBSON:** Thank you, Kerry, very much for moderating this discussion, and

thanks again, Father Hans, to all our participants, Karen Terry and Maggie Smith. Thank you all for being here.

This is not the end of our programming on the crisis, nor is it the end of the reform of the church. It will continue, and I hope you'll continue to support the CRC but above all the work of Father Hans and the Gregorian Foundation and the Leadership Roundtable.

Thank you all very much.