



A Resource for Synod Leaders:

Responding to a speaker who talks of the trauma of abuse by a minister of the Church

Tragically, some consultation participants will have had traumatic experiences of Church. Table/Breakout Room Leaders must take into account that those traumas are real and deserve our compassion above all. It is also true that the synodal consultation is not the place for long discourses of those tragedies. It is the place to recall and acknowledge that they happened, that they had a severe negative impact on individuals, families, faith communities, and the Church as a whole, and need to be prevented. For example, it is appropriate to recall that those tragedies happened and to talk about, for example, how a synodal Church might help prevent them happening again.

What can a Table/Breakout Room Leader do when an abuse or residential school survivor speaks?

- Acknowledge the trauma is real and deep.
- Thank the speaker for their courage, acknowledge the depth of hurt you hear as they speak. c. Set a boundary such as “I’m glad you had the courage to bring this tragedy up. While we cannot go deeply into the personal stories in this consultation, we do need to acknowledge the pain those abusers and coverups by Church leaders caused.”
- Set a direction such as “Those tragedies must be part of our considerations in these synodal consultations, which are forward leaning, looking at a renewed Church where such things cannot happen. As we consider the direction the Church needs to go, please keep the survivors and their families in mind. We do not want that abuse to continue.”
- Continue to lead the group through the discussion. If someone is visibly upset, they may want to take a moment to compose themselves. If they leave the table, one person may want to go to make sure they are okay. If the sharing requires follow up, do so after the small group time.
- If someone discloses sexual abuse, it is required to make a report to the Bishop’s Delegate all allegations of misconduct. If someone discloses something that puts someone or themselves in danger, but does not include abuse by a minister of the Church, consult with your Synod coordinator or a member of the parish staff.

The following is an excerpt from the [Safe Environment Policy](#):

- Every allegation of sexual abuse by a member of the clergy, a non-ordained member of an institute of consecrated life, society of apostolic life or new ecclesial movement, or a layperson engaged in apostolic activities must be reported to the Bishop’s Delegate or to the Bishop’s Deputy Delegate: Fr. John Comiskey or Sharon Wright-Evans
- When receiving a complaint, clergy, lay personnel, or volunteers are to limit themselves to listening and giving assurance that the Diocese takes all complaints seriously.
- When receiving a complaint clergy, lay personnel, or volunteers will inform the complainant that all complaints must be reported to the Bishop’s Delegate.
- The credibility of the complaint should not be commented on and assistance should be offered in contacting the Bishop’s Delegate.

Bishop’s Delegate: Fr. John Comiskey

Bishop’s Deputy Delegate: Sharon Wright-Evans

Contact: 519-433-0658 - Ask to speak to the Bishop’s Delegate, the Bishop’s Deputy Delegate, or the Director of Safe Environment Services.