Overview:
This 2-hour workshop is a dive into the role that the abuse of power has played in the “twin crises” of clergy sexual abuse and its coverup in the Catholic Church as well as an examination of the ways that empowering the laity can address the imbalance of power that contributed to these crises. The creation of this workshop was supported by the Taking Responsibility grant program at Fordham University.

Goal:
The goal of this workshop is to help participants recognize the power and responsibility of the laity in Catholic theology so that the laity can more fully embrace their vocation as the people of God.

Objectives:
At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:
- Explain the vision of the Catholic Church communicated to them previously and articulate the broad characteristics of the vision they would like the Catholic Church to pursue.
- Assess the values and limitations of two distinct understandings of conscience found in the Catholic tradition.
- Apply Ignatian categories to practice discernment in moral matters.

Materials:
- Projector
- Paper, coloring utensils, etc.
- Excerpts handouts (Appendix B)
- Discernment handouts (Appendix C)

Audience:
- Adults, primarily those who identify as Catholics

Facilitator Note:
- Facilitators should be familiar with the main categories of Catholic ecclesiology, the role of conscience in Catholic theology, and the concept of discernment in Ignatian thought.
- For further reading to contextualize this knowledge, see Appendix A: Reading List for more information.
Embracing Our Shared Responsibility

Teaching Notes & Materials

Outline:

- Welcome & Beginning in Prayer (5 mins)
- Introduction and Background - Best Practices for Lay Empowerment (15 mins)
- Topic 1: What is the Church? (30 mins)
  - Impact of Church as Mystery
  - Exercise 1: Illustrating Church
  - Exercise 2: Dynamics of Church
- Topic 2: Conscience (30 mins)
  - Primacy of Conscience
  - Exercise 3: Visions of Conscience
- Topic 3: Discernment (30 mins)
  - Ignatian Discernment
  - Exercise 4: Discernment
  - Large Group Discussion
- Closing Prayer/Meditation (10 mins)

Detailed Outline:

Welcome: Begin in Prayer (5 mins)

- 1 Cor. 12:12-27
- The passage emphasizes the theme of unity: One body has many different but united parts
- Significantly if one part suffers, all suffer with it, underscoring the importance of embracing a shared responsibility to respond to the abuse crisis. We are all part of this Church and therefore must take responsibility for the healing from past and creation of a more faithful future that honors all and prevents the suffering
  - Driving question for the workshop is what can we do as the laity to confront some of the root causes and to change things going forward so that we can work better as a faith community, to promote the protection (and flourishing) of all?
- Conversation in the workshop is about first steps
  - Before we get to concrete action plans, we need some resources for ourselves to help us all recognize and embrace the opportunities and capabilities we have within Church for contributing to a Catholic response
  - Practically, this means looking at our vision of the Church itself and our role within it; our understanding of conscience as a tool for empowerment within Catholic theology and Catholic Church, and some resources for discernment to support the use of that power
- Before diving in, I want to give just a little explanation about the context that has given rise to this three-fold focus in response to abuse crisis
Introduction and Background (15 mins)

This is an introduction about who I am, who they are, and why they showed up.

This section identifies the need for a project around lay empowerment, noting that there is an imbalance of power and that this is a precondition for abuse. To improve this, we must empower the laity.

- First, Who am I?
  - I started with a brief overview of my personal educational and faith background to explain how I became connected with this project.

- Second, background on the project that led to this workshop
  - Marquette received a subgrant from Fordham University—a Catholic, Jesuit school in New York City—as part of their major grant to “confront the causes and legacy of clergy sexual abuse.”
    - The Fordham grant project, “Taking Responsibility,” was shaped by the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report of 2018 and designed to support research into the protection of children, youth, and the vulnerable in the Catholic Church.

- At Marquette, we asked how we could contribute to this work, in light of our unique expertise as a team of theologians (some subgrant teams at other universities were interdisciplinary) and a group of lay men and women with particular concerns in the Church. We arrived at:

Best Practices for Lay Empowerment

- Based on research recognizing that the abuse of power is at the heart of the abuse crisis
- Our work seeks to correct an imbalance of power in the Catholic Church by encouraging a more empowered laity; we view this as a preventative project.
- To give a sense of what this means, the workshop included a short video from a Denver-area news report with one victim-survivor telling part of his story of abuse and its coverup.
  - I followed-up by asking participants where they saw power imbalances in the story.
  - The aim is to identify both minor/adult imbalances of power and the clergy/laity ones.

- All leads to the central claim informing our Marquette research team’s approach to “taking responsibility” in the Catholic Church: an abuse of power is at heart of the “twin crises” of abuse and its coverup
  - **Crisis 1:** In terms of the abuse itself, clergy’s status provides authority over potential victims and protects them with a set of assumptions about goodness/holiness/
    - This power is then used to disarm potential victims (e.g., grooming behaviors);
This power also used in conducting abuse, as potential victims are socialized to defer to someone in this position of authority

- **Crisis 2:** With respect to the cover-up (the second part of the “twin crises”), clergy’s status can also protect an abuser after abuse

- Clergy could often use their power to redefining the narrative, suggesting that what occurred was something other than “abuse” and convincing victims that this narrative is correct, because clergy have moral authority;
- Clerical status often made victims reluctant to report, out of the fear of “tarnishing” a reputation of someone with high status in their faith community;
- Clerical status often gave abusers the benefit of the doubt, leading to doubts about victims’ reports when they did come forward.

- These observations show how a **power imbalance** is really at the source of the crisis

  - This claim is consistent with the conclusion of many experts (including Pope Francis) who identify “clericalism” as a key feature of the abuse crisis.

- “clericalism is an attitude of seeing the clergy as a sacred and closed community—a community unto itself, a community with secret truths, separate from the more general People of God, and set over and against the lower, profane world inhabited by others” (Stephen Schneck CUA professor)

  - This recognition suggests two possible solutions: either reduce the power of the clergy or increase the power of the laity to counteract the imbalance
  - Given my role as a lay man, my work focuses on the latter, resulting in this workshop with three key emphases.

- This workshop will cover 3 topics: **Church, conscience, and discernment**

- Perspective demands that we ask “What defines our power (or lack thereof) in the Church?”

  - Key element = how we view ourselves a) in relation to others (esp. though not exclusively ordained clergy) and b) in relation to the Church
  - In many ways, then, ecclesiology (theology of the church) at heart of the power imbalances that facilitated abuse crisis
  - Crucial question then = What is the Church?

### What is the Church? (30 mins)

This section is meant to explore attendees’ understanding of church, the images they currently have, and expanding understanding of church to include more than a hierarchical power structure.

- I begin with the topic of the Church, because how we view ourselves in relation to others in the Church—and how we position ourselves in the Church—says a lot about the power we have and the power we accord to others.
A crucial starting point for empowering the laity, then, is to answer “What is Church?”

Before we get to direct answers to this question, however, I invite participants to reflect on the images they carry for the Church, because an image says a lot about where we imagine our (proper) place to be.

**Exercise 1: Illustrating Church**

For this first exercise, participants are asked to think about how they were taught to understand the Catholic Church and then to imagine how they might depict that conception with a visual image.

They were given drawing materials (e.g., paper, colored pencils, etc.) so that they could visually represent the way the Church had been taught to them.

After approximately 5 minutes for reflection and drawing, participants were asked to share their illustrations in small groups of 2-3.

Questions to prompt reflection were: Where do you see yourself in this image? What does this imply about your (and the laity’s) role or power in the Church?

After 5 minutes of small group sharing, a large group conversation allowed participants to explain key themes that emerged from their small group conversations.

Major themes included hierarchical models with power concentrated at the top (think the image of a pyramid) and static models with everyone’s place clearly defined (think the image of a chart or graph with different columns related to different rows).

A summary reflection notes how these concrete images are not surprising, because Catholic teaching about the Church is often very concrete, in order to help people understand otherwise abstract ideas about the community of faith.

The problem, however, is that making things overly concrete undermines the Catholic theology of the Church, which stresses (in the words of the Second Vatican Council) that the Church is properly a mystery.

As a mystery, the Church is never fully understood or expressed in one model alone.

**Many Ways of Understanding Church**

To illustrate this point, I turn to Avery Dulles’s Models of the Church to show that, consistent with the idea of the Church as Mystery, there are many ways to understand the Church.

Dulles’s Models of Church:

1. Institution (an efficient hierarchy that delivers teaching; puts emphasis on the clergy and those acting in an “official” capacity; centralizes power)
2. Body of Christ (emphasizes unity through the Pauline message of different parts united in one body)
3. Sacrament (stresses the Church as a sign revealing the God we can’t see through the people we can; much like how the ripples we can see on
the surface of the water assure us there is a fish below, even though we cannot see it)

■ (4) Herald (of the Kingdom of God; emphasizes the importance of active evangelization/proselytization)

■ (5) Servant (stresses the Church’s responsibility to care for the world and be at its service; emphasizes actions that help others and witness to the Kingdom more than the words emphasized by the Herald model)

○ Notably, the models all have limitations (e.g., body of Christ runs the risk of turning the Church into a “social club” and not much more), but all point to the fact that a hierarchical model alone isn’t the only option. In fact, they show that there is room for more horizontal models, which is perfectly consistent with the Second Vatican Council

- To highlight room for a more horizontal ecclesiology, I discuss how the Second Vatican Council presents the Church as a mystery with significant internal equality.

○ The first key basis for equality is the Universal Call to Holiness in *Lumen Gentium*
  ■ This contrasts with an earlier model that envisioned two divergent paths, and placed clergy on the ‘higher/holier’ path with laity on the ‘lower, profane’ path.

○ The second basis for equality is the Priesthood of all believers in *Lumen Gentium*
  ■ “Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.”
  ■ While there are clear distinctions between ordained clergy and the laity, there is a common link to singular priesthood of Christ

○ One key to addressing power imbalance in the Church, then, is to challenge divisive visions of Church, and to emphasize visions that put the egalitarian emphases of the Second Vatican Council at the heart of the Church.

- **Exercise 2: Dynamics of Church**

  ○ To reflect on these connections, participants are invited to return to their images and to imagine not so much how they were taught to see the Church (as they did in the first exercise), but how they would like to see the Church.

    ■ If time allows, they are invited to redraw this second image and then to discuss the changes with their same small group.

  ○ Key tendencies of these images tend to be that they are more dynamic/less static, more horizontal/less vertical, suggesting a more egalitarian model

  ○ This allows for a discussion of Dulles’s own preferred model, the “community of disciples”

    ○ Community of Disciples model has elements of all others and is designed to stress the common project of formation (e.g., that we all help each other), the importance of cooperation, and the reality of our mutual dependence (on each other, on God) in pursuit of the mission of the Church
The concluding question for this part of the workshop is then, “How do we achieve these images? (i.e., move toward more egalitarian structure)"

- The suggestion, which allows a pivot to the next topic, is that we can achieve a greater equality in the Church when we better appreciate the power we all have within us, which is a point that Catholic teachings on conscience helpfully highlight.

**Conscience (30 mins)**

This section is meant to explore Catholic understandings of conscience and its role in our involvement in the church as laity.

- **Primacy of Conscience**
  - One essential claim in Catholic theology is that each person is bound to follow their conscience, even when their conscience is in error. There is no higher authority!
    - This provides an equalizing source of power for all in the Church, clergy and laity alike, as we are all subject to the dictates of our conscience.
  - While the primacy of conscience is thus a potential source of greater lay empowerment in theory, it is not always easy to put this empowerment into practice because there are meaningful tensions in the Catholic view of conscience.
  - To explain these tensions, I compare and contrast two notions of conscience found in Catholic moral theology: the legalistic and personalist
    - **Legalistic View of Conscience** emphasizes knowing the rules and suggests that following them is simple
      - One can think of the image of an umpire to capture this concept. Umpires call balls and strikes based on rules established elsewhere.
      - Note that right and wrong are objective in both the legalistic and personalist understandings of conscience. The difference is that the legalistic view assumes the only way to know what is objectively right or wrong is to get the answer from the Church’s Magisterium.
    - **Personalist View of Conscience** similarly accepts objective right/wrong, but asserts that personal judgment is needed to identify what is objectively right (or wrong), especially in unique circumstances.
      - One can think of the image of a map and compass to illustrate this concept. There are objective givens (e.g., true north, the map) but a traveler still has to figure out how to get from point A to point B their own particular way.
In this instance, the response to doubt is not simple deference to an external authority, but an invitation to search for what is known, as benchmarks, and then to prayerfully find the best way forward.

- Both of these visions of conscience are at work in Catholic teaching; it is not really an either/or.
  - To highlight this point, participants are given four excerpts from official Vatican documents describing conscience (Appendix B). They are not initially told which documents each excerpt comes from but are instead asked to read through all four and to note the different ways conscience is described. They should see both legalistic and personalist views of conscience.
  - Participants are asked to pay attention to their reactions to the different excerpts so that they can note which vision(s) of conscience are most appealing to them and examine why that might be the case.

- Exercise 3: Visions of Conscience
  - Participants are each given all four excerpts from Vatican documents to review quietly on their own. They are encouraged to mark up the texts, identifying areas where they are unsure of the text’s meaning as well as ideas to which they have a particularly strong reaction.
  - After 5-10 minutes, participants are asked to discuss their reactions in small groups of 2-3. The conversation focuses on the elements that were most appealing to each participant, the ones that were most off putting, and why.
  - After discussing in pairs/threes for approximately 5 minutes, participants are invited to share together.
    - Participants are invited to identify specific passages that came up in their small group discussions. Others are encouraged to explain their reactions to the same passages.
  - To conclude the exercise, I identify the different passages and call attention to the vision of conscience emphasized in Amoris Laetitia, which notes that conscience "can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God..."
    - We discuss how much responsibility this places on conscience and note that we need to practice this kind of careful judgment in conscience if we are to use our consciences well.
    - This provides the pivot to the final exercise, which looks at discernment as a practice that asks our conscience to make precisely the kinds of dynamic judgments about how God is actually calling us in the moment that AL envisions.
Discernment (30 mins)

This section is meant to explore the meaning of discernment and its role in our lives as laity in the church with relation to power dynamics.

- I begin this section of the workshop with a simple definition of discernment as the art of prayerful decision-making and stress that it is indeed an art (dynamic, responsive to circumstances, perfected over time) and not a science (more rigid and universal).
  - Significantly, discernment is relational, requiring God’s input.
  - Discernment asks us to identify values, so that we can articulate what is really at stake in a given decision.
  - Once we have our values identified, discernment provides the practices that help us identify what it means to live up to those values in concrete situations.

- There are many great resources for discernment in the Catholic tradition, but this workshop emphasizes Ignatian discernment because 1) it is a particularly well-defined form of discernment with multiple practices and 2) it is the form of Catholic discernment I know best from my own professional training and personal prayer.
  - To understand the particular features of Ignatian discernment, it is helpful to have at least some sense of the life (and personal discernment experience) of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.
    - Born into a noble family in Spain, Ignatius was a soldier and desired honor and fame.
    - After getting hit by a cannonball in battle, Ignatius was forced to endure a prolonged recovery, during which he occupied himself with a book about the life of Christ and another about the lives of the saints.
    - Reflecting on his experience with these texts, Ignatius realized he was emotionally drawn into these stories and far more consoled imagining himself serving God as these figures did than he ever was a soldier.
    - As a result of these experiences, Ignatius abandoned his life as a soldier and became a pilgrim. He eventually developed his *Spiritual Exercises* (now a month-long retreat program) to help people encounter God in much the same way he did so that they could better discern how God could be calling them to live their lives.
  - From Ignatius’s experience, and his written *Spiritual Exercises*, three key features of Ignatian discernment emerge:
    - **First**, discernment is rooted in imaginative/immersive Prayer. Sustained meditation (usually on scriptural passages) is key to the *Exercises*, but always done in a way that invites the participant to imagine themselves in the story.
    - **Second**, the practice of discernment usually begins with a petition of desire, or an explicit statement of what one hopes to achieve in prayer. This allows the participant to identify their values and name their desire.
Third, attention to affections is crucial for this discernment. Specifically, Ignatius emphasized the importance of consolations (feelings of reassurance, confidence, or comfort) and desolation (feelings of anxiety, doubt, or discomfort). Consolations illuminate movement toward God while desolations reflect the opposite. Both help discern the best way forward in context.

The next exercise will provide an opportunity to practice Ignatian Discernment now as a way of training conscience to live up to its primacy, so that participants can be more confident taking their place in the image of the church they detailed.

**Exercise 4: Discernment**

To help the workshop participants understand Ignatian discernment and to explore ways they might use it in their own lives, the last segment of the workshop includes a guided discernment exercise (Appendix D).

- The exercise focuses on discernment in moral matters, because this is the area where our consciences are able to live up to the lofty calling found in the Catholic tradition.
- The goal is to give everyone an experience of what it might take to discern carefully in conscience, so that they can embrace the primacy of conscience with greater confidence in their own lives.

Participants are given two options for the discernment exercise.

- **Option 1** is about discerning moral choices. For this option, participants should have a specific moral quandary they are trying to resolve in their own lives. (Or at least a decision with moral weight, which as the exercise sheet notes, can be almost any decision when we consider moral consequences carefully.)
- **Option 2** is about discerning moral values more broadly. This option is good for participants who do not have an immediate decision that comes to mind. The object of this option is to help participants reflect on the overarching moral commitments and values that they want to direct their specific decisions.

Participants should have 15-20 minutes to work through option 1 or option 2, using the discernment exercises handout, in silence.

**Large Group Discussion**

After the 15-20 minutes, participants are brought back together to discuss their experiences working through moral discernment in an Ignatian fashion.

- It is helpful to get a sense of how many people selected each option. Participants can be asked to explain why they gravitated toward one option or the other.
- The substance of the conversation should focus on how the experience went for the participants. Was it easy or difficult to reflect on these moral matters? Were there moments of grace for participants? Were there challenges or obstacles they had to face?
After participants have had an opportunity to share their experiences, this activity wraps up with a discussion of common themes that have emerged. The goal is to help the participants assess the implications of their personal experience with moral discernment for the larger project of moral discernment in the Church.

- Hopefully, participants’ experiences will show how discernment as an Ignatian practice can be a meaningful way of getting in touch with God and hearing God’s guidance. It thus can serve as a spiritual practice for empowerment.
- The experience should also be tied to the discussions of conscience. Given the image of conscience as the “voice of God…echoing in [our] depths,” discernment is a crucial exercise for hearing this voice and understanding how God is speaking to us in the concrete particulars of our lives.
- It is important to stress that discernment needs to be practiced; as a skill, discernment is cultivated over time.

Discernment is also challenging, and thus we benefit from accountability as we practice discernment. In fact, our best hope for living up to the lofty calling of our consciences is to build a genuine “culture of discernment” in the Church.

- The vision for this culture entails a group of like-minded laity to support one another’s discernment in conscience.
  - Think, for example, a small faith sharing group with whom one would be comfortable saying, “Can I run this by you?” when trying to discern moral matters in conscience.
  - The benefits are not feeling so alone and also having genuine collaboration in spiritual growth.
- Notably, for a culture of discernment to emerge requires all 3 elements discussed in this workshop: It promotes a horizontal/egalitarian ecclesial vision and facilitates greater equality by reclaiming consciences together w/ others as they discern.
- In practical terms, then, I encourage participants to think about ways they might be able to support this kind of culture of discernment at parish level.

**Concluding Discussion and Closing Prayer (10 mins)**

- Philippians 2:1-8
- This scripture passage shows God’s vision for power, which is used selflessly, in the service of others. If the goal of the workshop is greater lay empowerment, this vision of kenotic (self-emptying) power is essential to ensure that this empowerment does not lead to an imbalance of power—or an abuse of power—in a different direction.
  - It also speaks to the work of developing a culture of discernment and accountability in conscience, as that work can only succeed if everyone is willing to turn their power toward the service of others.
- Ultimately, Philippians provides a vision of true empowerment, so the workshop can close with a joint prayer that we might all use our power in the Church to make this vision of selfless service an ever more complete reality.
Appendix A

Reading List
Reading List

Here are recommended resources to help participants and any facilitators familiarize themselves with the theological assumptions informing the three key topics in this workshop and the way they are presented as opportunities for lay empowerment.

For the understanding of the Church as a Mystery and the multiple images used to represent this theological concept, see:
  - First published in 1978, Dulles's text attempts to categorize the various theological reflections on the Church found throughout the Catholic tradition using a typology of five models. The expanded version adds the sixth “Communion of Disciples” image in attempt to bring all the previous models together.
- For those who might find Dulles' full text daunting, there are also some excellent online summaries that capture the key ideas in a more accessible format.
  - One accessible written summary
  - One accessible video summary

For the understanding of conscience and the tensions in the Catholic tradition, see:
  - Hogan, an Irish Catholic moral theologian, explains the legalistic and personalist visions of conscience and charts their roots in and tensions since the Second Vatican Council.
- For those looking for a more accessible discussion of some of these same trends, the Jesuit moral theologian James Keenan has two shorter articles reflecting on conscience that appeared in *America* magazine:
  - “Who Are We to Judge? How Scripture and Tradition Help to Form Our Consciences”
  - “The Arrested Development of the American Conscience in Moral Decision Making”

For the understanding of discernment, specifically in an Ignatian context, and its value as a tool for spiritual empowerment, see:
  - Gallagher provides a comprehensive introduction to discernment, using perspectives and practices found in St. Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*. Although he focuses less on moral questions, the practices explained here are just as applicable to moral matters and can be seen employed in the discernment exercise used in this workshop.
- For those looking for a briefer introduction to these Ignatian themes, there are also accessible internet resources, including:
  - “What is Ignatian Discernment?”
  - “Jesuit 101: Finding Our Way through Ignatian Discernment”
Appendix B

Visions of Conscience
Visions of Conscience
(All excerpts from Vatican translations of Magisterial Documents)

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<td>St. John Paul II, <em>Veritatis Splendor</em> (Encyclical, 6 Aug. 1993), nos. 59, 64.</td>
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Excerpt 1

In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. (9) Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor.
Excerpt 2

Conscience is the application of the law to a particular case; this application of the law thus becomes an inner dictate for the individual, a summons to do what is good in this particular situation. The judgment of conscience states "in an ultimate way" whether a certain particular kind of behaviour is in conformity with the law.

It follows that the authority of the Church, when she pronounces on moral questions, in no way undermines the freedom of conscience of Christians. This is so not only because freedom of conscience is never freedom "from" the truth but always and only freedom "in" the truth. The Church puts herself always and only at the service of conscience, helping it to avoid being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine proposed by human deceit (cf. Eph 4:14), and helping it not to swerve from the truth about the good of man, but rather, especially in more difficult questions, to attain the truth with certainty and to abide in it.
Excerpt 3

Every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgments of conscience, under use of all suitable means.

Truth, however, is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which men explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth.

Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that men are to adhere to it.…

In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience in order that he may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious.
Excerpt 4

We also find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them....

Conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal. In any event, let us recall that this discernment is dynamic; it must remain ever open to new stages of growth and to new decisions which can enable the ideal to be more fully realized.
Appendix C

Practicing the Art of Discernment
Practicing the Art of Discernment

Option 1 – Discerning Moral Choices

1. Identify a choice you had to make or know you will have to make. The choice should have some moral weight. (Note, “moral weight” can be considered broadly. Specific moral quandaries obviously have moral weight, but something more “ordinary” like choosing whether to take a new job has moral significance too.) This exercise works best if you can narrow your decision to two contrasting options.

2. Pray for the grace you desire: Ask God for the grace to discern well in this situation. Consider what you need most to discern well in this situation—is it clarity? Is it a better sense of the consequences? Something else? Include a specific petition for this insight.

3. Imagine yourself facing this decision (either again, or in the future). Try to put yourself into a scene where you must decide once and for all. Use your senses to conjure an immersive experience as you tackle this decision. If you are sitting on a chair, what does it feel like? What noises are you hearing from the environment around you? What or whom do you see? What kind of details can you pick out on these people or things?

4. Once you can comfortably see yourself in the moment, imagine pursuing the first course of action.
   a. What does this look like as you play it out in your head? What are the immediate consequences? What are the longer-term consequences?
   b. Try to let mini “scenes” of the life where you have made this choice play out in your imagination. Pay attention to your affective responses as you “watch” these scenes. Are you comforted and reassured by what you are seeing? Are you uncomfortable or anxious?
   c. Take note of whether you had more positive affections (consolations) or more negative affections (desolations) overall.

5. Repeat the process, but imagine pursuing the second course of action. Redo a. – c. above.

6. Shift gears and use your senses again to imagine Jesus is next to you. Walk with him and talk about your prayer experience. Let him ask questions as you describe feelings of consolation and desolation. Listen to what he is revealing and see if you can settle on a course of action.

7. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving that allows you to name any graces you have received.
Option 2: Discerning Moral Values

1. Take a minute to calm and compose yourself. Close your eyes and take three deep breaths.

2. Pray for the grace you desire: In this exercise, you will focus on discerning your most important moral values, the ones you need to prioritize as you make specific moral decisions. Ask God, therefore, to receive greater insight into the values God wants you to cultivate now and going forward.

3. Use your senses to imagine yourself at the end of your life, looking down at a group of people gathered for your funeral. What does the scene look like? Is it a bright and airy room or a darker space? Is the tenor of the moment somber, as people reflect on their loss, or celebratory, as they reflect on your life? Once you think you can imagine the scene effectively, work through the following questions:
   a. Who do you hope to see there? Whose presence will bring you consolation? What sort of relational connections do you want to have established by the end of your life: An even bigger family than the one you have now? A network of people from different walks of life? A group of a certain kind of coworkers? Friends with whom you are currently out of touch? Your answers here reveal something about the relationships you want to prioritize.
   b. What regrets (desolations) does this reflection stir? Who is missing that you would want to have there?

4. Next, immerse yourself further in the scene and begin to listen to the conversations.
   a. As you listen to what people are saying about you, what reflections bring you consolation? When you hear them describing personality traits, which ones generate pride for you?
   b. What aspects of their conversation are troubling for you? What character flaws are they identifying (even if implicitly or inadvertently)?

5. Shift gears and imagine Jesus is next to you now. Walk with him and talk about this prayer experience. Explain your consolations and desolations and ask Jesus for further insight into what they might mean. What commitments—to people, to virtues, to values—seem most important in light of this exercise? Do your answers to these questions suggest a need to explore any concrete changes in your life now?

6. Close with a prayer of thanksgiving that allows you to name any graces you have received.
Appendix C

Slide Deck
EMBRACING OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

*Spiritual Resources for an Empowered Lay Response to the Abuse Crisis*

Presented in partnership with Awake, Fordham University’s *Taking Responsibility* project, and Marquette University
Why this? Why now?

Response to clergy abuse crisis in Catholic Church

- “to advance research regarding the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable persons”

Marquette Response
- Skills/Expertise (theology)
- Chief concerns
Best Practices for Lay Empowerment

(Survivor Story)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPuD4YNCCQA
Best Practices for Lay Empowerment

- Abuse of Power at the heart of “twin crises”
  - Use of power as clergy to groom potential victims and commit abuse
  - Use of power as clergy to direct narrative and minimize reporting/consequences
Best Practices for Lay Empowerment

Roots = Power Imbalance
A critical question:

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?
Lumen Gentium: Church is a “Mystery”
Institution

Herald

Body of Christ

Servant

Sacrament
Lumen Gentium: Church is a “Mystery”

- Basis for greater equality
  - Universal Call to Holiness (Chpt. 5)
  - Priesthood of all believers (no. 10)
How do you want to imagine the Church?
Community of Disciples
HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS IMAGE?
Primacy of Conscience

Legalistic Conscience

Personalist Conscience
VISIONS OF CONSCIENCE

• Which descriptions of conscience appeal to you? Why?

• Which descriptions of conscience are you resisting? Why?
VISIONS OF CONSCIENCE

• **Excerpt 1**: Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution, 7 Dec. 1965)

• **Excerpt 2**: St. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (Encyclical, 6 Aug. 1993)

• **Excerpt 3**: Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Freedom, 7 Dec. 1965)

• **Excerpt 4**: Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (Post-Synodal Exhortation, 19 Mar. 2016)
Discernment: Key Resource for Spiritual Empowerment

- Art of prayerful decision-making
  - Skill of listening to God’s guidance
  - Identification of values
  - Strategies to embody values
Ignatian Discernment: Unique Tools
Ignatian Discernment: Unique Tools

- Imaginative/Immersive Prayer
- Petition of Desire
- Attention to Affections
  - Consolations
  - Desolations
Discernment: A Communal Calling