

## **Key Findings & Ongoing Agendas**



While a separate document later in this report offers recommendations that are aimed at administrators, faculty, trustees, provincial officials, and others in positions of responsibility at Jesuit institutions, here we offer some of the key findings of our research teams, both individually and collectively, with suggestions for how Jesuit institutions in particular might proceed.

### **1. Practices of Safeguarding and Historical Memory Work Are Complementary**

**WE SEE A DIVIDE EMERGING** in research and practice between those focused primarily on “safeguarding” and those focused on what we are calling “historical memory work.” Safeguarding is the vital work focused on putting best practices in place to prevent present and future abuse. Historical memory work, on the other hand, continues to produce new research on what happened in the past, in many cases performing a very close analysis of instances of abuse. This research is not impractical even if, in many cases, the abusers in question are elderly or dead, new policies have been put into place over the last two decades, and/or many are convinced that it is time to “move forward.” Nor is it redundant, telling us things we already know. It is, rather, a way of supporting survivors in the present, and of understanding how particular communities’ experiences with abuse have shaped them. We think it is critical, going forward, for these approaches to be complementary. Safeguarding work at any given institution should be paired with a repository of case studies. We should promote the memorializing of the history of Jesuit abuse and all forms of sexual abuse on campuses where the deepest commitments of these educational institutions have been scandalously violated. How can we keep these memories alive liturgically and in our living institutional memory, as an impetus to our ongoing commitments? How can our institutions be accountable in the present for what they have done in the past to dismiss allegations or cover up scandal? Should it include financial reparation to victims (and if so in what form), curricular commitments, liturgical performance, or a mix?

### **2. Contexts of race and colonialism are critical**

**VERY LITTLE RESEARCH** has been dedicated to clergy sexual abuse perpetrated against persons of color and indigenous populations, including Black, Latin American, Asian and Pacific Islanders, and Native American populations. Yet what does exist, including several studies sponsored by Taking Responsibility, indicates that unsurprisingly the colonial context of missionary work, the racial dynamics of the post-1492 era, and the power imbalances created by migration are all critical frames for understanding clerical sexual abuse in modern North America. Jesuit institutions are beginning to study their history with regards to, for example, Native American boarding schools, colonial missions, and African enslavement; these investigations, and the commitments resulting from them, should be seen as overlapping the sexual abuse scandals. This is often because they literally overlap, with the conditions of enslavement or of missions opening many opportunities for sexual abuse by Jesuits and their employees, but it is also because the dynamics of these investigations and Jesuit responses to them have notable similarities. We urge a basic commitment to profound honesty in these investigations, candor in following through on associated commitments, and resistance to the temptation to reject the need for reparative work or for continual improvement regarding both racism and sexual abuse.

### **3. Lay and Jesuit collaboration is essential**

**LAY MEMBERS OF THE EXTENDED JESUIT COMMUNITY** are often strongly committed to the Jesuit identity and mission of these institutions of higher learning; as such they should be invited to participate with the Jesuit community, administrators, and boards of trustees as collaborators in discernment. While Jesuits and their extended communities – including many with a deep attachment to the Jesuit mission – have learned to work together over the years since control of institutions began passing more into lay hands, the management of and disclosure around sexual abuse is an area where more collaboration is not only possible

but necessary. Jesuit provincials, university, and high school administrators can and should practice transparency with regards to disclosure of old records and invite collaboration with those who want to study them, as discussed in more detail in our recommendations.

#### **4. Jesuit formation programs are critical to addressing clergy abuse**

**JESUIT FORMATION PROCESSES** over the last decades have made great strides in developing programming to both address sexuality more generally and towards preventing sexual abuse in particular. However, we suggest that even greater attention be devoted to “anti-clericalism” – that is, stressing that those in formation must see themselves as equal to others, and as responsible for pain their sexual actions might cause to others (whether men, women, or children).

**DURING THE FORMATION PROCESS,** Jesuits interact closely with lay peers in graduate school or ministry assignments; with each other in intense relationships forged through living and working together; and with more senior Jesuits responsible for them. All three situations have great promise for forming healthy and life-giving relationships. Yet each of them also carries some risk of peril, as those in formation are in a vulnerable position vis a vis supervisors and perhaps some of their peers, as well as in a position to do harm to both Jesuit and lay peers. No program will perfectly address all possible situations, so we urge those responsible to continue to be alert to the structural vulnerability of those in formation, as well as to preventing harm to others.

#### **5. Exploring and addressing trauma and moral injury is unfinished work**

**DIRECT VICTIMS OF CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE** should always be the main priority, but many other people are impacted: as friends and family members of victims and of abusers, or more distantly as students, alumni, faculty, staff of Jesuit institutions, or simply as Catholics. In different



ways, direct victims and these communities experience trauma and may experience what several of our projects call moral injury. Jesuit institutions should attend to this reality in an ongoing way as a long-term project, offering counseling, curricular commitments to teaching about sexual abuse, and regular rituals such as a mass of lament. When a particular case of abuse is disclosed that particularly affects the institution, these ongoing commitments may help the community to handle the disclosure. Regardless, when these cases are disclosed institutions should recognize that many people besides the direct victim(s) are profoundly emotionally impacted. Counseling should be offered and the community should explore ways to move forward together, which should include disclosure of the outcome of the case; discussion of the broader context; and, again, possible ritual responses.

#### **6. Interdisciplinarity is difficult, but essential**

**OUR REVIEW OF EXISTING RESEARCH** on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, as well as the experience of our research teams, has taught us that it is challenging to form true interdisciplinary teams. Researchers and other parties who may become part of a team, such as advisory committee

members, victim-survivor advocates, and administrators, all bring distinct backgrounds and questions, professional vocabularies, and accepted ways of working to the table, and learning how to ask questions in common takes significant time which can be difficult to come by. At the same time, the phenomenon of sexual abuse in a Catholic context does not conform to disciplinary boundaries. Understanding and addressing sexual abuse means asking questions as psychologists, sociologists, historians, and theologians do, and using professional expertise such as that provided by social workers, management/communications researchers and others in business schools, researchers in law schools, those engaged in training campus ministers and spiritual directors, and likely many others. We urge Jesuit universities to incentivize researchers from multiple departments to assemble projects, providing them with financial resources and the time to grow in companionship among themselves and with the community.

