

QUESTION & ANSWER



Please note: All media inquiries should be directed to the Diocese of Scranton's communications office.

This document is intended to help prepare you as you communicate with parishioners and the community at large surrounding the Grand Jury report.

1. Have you had a chance to review the Grand Jury report yet? If so, what is your initial reaction?

- The Grand Jury report brings to light uncomfortable and unsettling issues regarding past actions of the church in Pennsylvania and the Diocese of Scranton. Although painful to acknowledge, this is necessary to further aid victims and to foster a time when no child is abused and no abuser is protected.
- The report underscores the importance of the procedures and standards we've put in place to protect our children.

2. How long have you known about the Grand Jury report and how do you feel about the investigation?

- I learned of the Grand Jury report when the public was made aware.
- The Diocese of Scranton fully cooperated with the investigation, providing all information the Grand Jury requested.
- While what's happened in the past cannot be changed, the Diocese has made strides to restore trust through years of ongoing improvements to policies and safe environment practices. While we are making every effort to prevent such issues in the future, there is much work to be done to promote healing.

3. Why do you think it is taking a Grand Jury report to bring this awful issue to light?

- The Grand Jury report certainly brought the issue to light publicly, but some of the cases in the report date back more than 50 years. While of course heartbreaking, the issue of child sexual assault is not new to us, and keeping children safe has long been a top priority at the Diocese of Scranton.
- The Diocese actively follows the best practices for ensuring the safety and security of our children, and we consistently review and improve our policies and procedures.

4. How do you feel knowing you may have worked alongside members of the clergy who are guilty of abuse?

- It's sickening and I'm angry. Child sexual abuse cannot be tolerated and must be eradicated from our Church.
- The safety and security of our children is our primary concern, and we actively follow the best practices for ensuring they are protected.

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5. **How are other members of the parish reacting to the news? Do you expect the behaviors described in the report will impact attendance at mass and other church events?**
- People will cope with the news and behaviors described in the report in their own ways and we will support them in any way we can.
 - I believe the report's impact will continue to be felt for years to come. While difficult, it is necessary for us to address the report to move ahead in a more positive way. It will take time for our people to trust and to return to a sense of peace with the institutional church.
 - The report underscores the importance of the procedures and standards we have put in place.
6. **If a victim was sitting with you today, what would you say to them about this report, the history of abuse within the Church, and the lack of leadership shown to protect children from predators?**
- I would say that I am sorry for all that has been. While I will never be able to understand fully the pain that a victim has or continues to experience, I certainly appreciate the depth of their pain and upheaval.
 - The Church let you down.
 - I can only hope and pray that, in time, you come to experience the good that is also part of the Church.
 - The report – and the reminder of the victims – underscores the importance of the procedures and standards we have put in place.
7. **What is the Church doing today to keep our children safe?**
- The safety and security of our children is our primary concern, and we actively follow the best practices for ensuring they are protected.
 - We have a comprehensive child protection program in place, which includes:
 1. Criminal background and child abuse clearances for all employees and volunteers
 2. Since 2003, more than 28,000 adults have been trained in child protection awareness, sexual abuse prevention, reporting, victim advocacy and more
 3. Every child in kindergarten through 12th grade is taught how to recognize and report inappropriate behavior
 - If you have additional questions, I can connect you with the individual in charge of our program.

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8. What does the Church do if an allegation is made against a member of the clergy?

- We strictly adhere to a zero tolerance policy on abuse.
- We immediately notify law enforcement of all allegations of abuse.
- We notify Pennsylvania Child Line.
- We remove abusers from ministry and immediately notify the parish and the public.
- We provide all necessary support to victims, knowing that the healing process can be difficult and lengthy.
- If you have additional questions, I can connect you with the individual in charge of our program.

9. As a parent, how do I know this won't happen again?

- I can assure you that the safety and security of our children is our primary concern. Since Bishop Bambera assumed his role at the Diocese of Scranton, we've focused on implementing and strengthening our policies and procedures and we are committed to continuing to do so in the future.
- All new hires and volunteers undergo strict criminal background and child abuse clearances, and are trained extensively on child protection awareness, sexual abuse prevention, reporting, victim advocacy and more.
- Regardless of the details, any member of the clergy who is guilty of abuse is removed from ministry immediately. We strictly adhere to a zero-tolerance policy on abuse.

10. How should I address this report with my children?

- The Diocese of Scranton has a number of resources that can help you discuss the behaviors described in the report with your children.
- Every child in kindergarten through 12th grade is taught how to recognize and report inappropriate behavior through our comprehensive child protection program.
- If you have additional questions, I can connect you with our Safe Environment Coordinator, Kathy Bolinski.

11. What efforts are being made to help the victims of abuse?

- We retain a Victim Assistance Coordinator, who is an integral part of our response to allegations of sexual assault. This individual is responsible for immediate pastoral care of all victims of sexual assault, including support and financial assistance for counseling, spiritual direction and other support groups.
- If you have additional questions, I can connect you with our Victim Assistance Coordinator, Mary Beth Pacuska.