

Healing Workshop Helps By Anne Thielen

On January 9, people seeking help processing the handling and dismissal of Fr. John Zickert from St. Mary's Greenville, came together for a three and a half hour workshop and prayer session.

It was the first of several gathering opportunities provided by the *Beacon of Hope* leaders, for those grieving the unexpected loss of such a dynamic leader from our midst.

Guided by an experienced professional loss therapist, participants were able to share feelings and losses. We were able to affirm each other's pain, learn the normal responses to grief, and feel a sense of hope. Our experience of unfair tactics, diminished respect, and ultimate loss, was heard and understood.

Listed below are the comments shared by the more than 75 participants.

Feelings about our loss

Sadness
Anger
Suspicion
Mistrust
Insignificant
Helplessness
Betrayal
Feelings not validated
Empty
Lost
Fearful
Disillusioned
Revenge
Hopelessness
Confusion
Guilt
Violated
Not valued
Not accepted
Exhaustion
Disappointed
Surprise of power
Despair

Items we feel we have lost

Friendships
Closeness
Joy in celebration of the Mass
Security
Anticipation of joyful celebration
Loss of doctrine-progressive
Loss of Vatican II ideals
Loss of value
The sense that we, the body of Christ, are less important than ritual
Tradition is more important than Christ's message
Hierarchy is more important than the body of the Church
Loss of interaction with leadership
Belief in diocese

Respect for our Bishop
Self-worth in the eyes of institution Church
Sense of progress
Emotional safety
Certainty
Sense of celebration at liturgy
Involvement
Loss of leadership
Loss of voice
Sense of humor
Loss of status
Loss of control
Loss of rational thought
Loss of community
Spiritual home
Hope for our young people
Home for young people
Faith
Involvement
Sense of direction
Idea for the future—a dream for our church
Our Hope
Belief in justice

So often, well meaning souls, have told us to move on. At this workshop, we were told that reactions to trauma such as this can last longer than one might suspect.

We were encouraged to accept each other's grief as different from our own, for no two people grieve in the same way or on the same timeline. We also heard that pushing us to "get over it" is not helpful for us right now.

Although the workshop time went quickly, we did start brainstorming ideas for what can be done to help each of us individually and collectively.

What can we do?

Pray
Turn again to scripture
Cry
Take assertive action
Give ourselves time
Use humor
Exercise
Vent
Validate each other
Try to respect our differences
Agree to disagree

If you wanted to attend this workshop or one like it, but were unable, it may help you feel you are not alone. Perhaps you will find insight from our sharing. God bless. # # #