

COVENANT

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MAY
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2019

Annual Benefit Dinner

COLUMBUS EVENT CENTRE
(SALA CABOTO BALLROOM)
40 PLAYFAIR AVENUE
TORONTO, ON M6B 2P9

Guest of Honour:

Most Rev. Daniel J. Miehms, D.D.
Bishop of Peterborough

TRIBUTE TO
MR. JOHN GENNARO

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The Southdown Institute Announces New President

The Southdown Institute Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Rev. Stephan Kappler, Psy.D., as President, effective February 1, 2019. Chair of the Board, Patrick Crowley, stated, "Following a worldwide search, we found a new President for Southdown. Fr. Kappler will play a significant role in serving Southdown and the broader Church." This appointment is part of a planned leadership transition whereby Fr. Kappler will replace Sr. Dorothy Heiderscheit, OSF, whose five-year tenure as Chief Executive Officer came to completion at the end of January.

Fr. Kappler brings to Southdown a wealth of experience in the field of mental health and service within the Church, ministering in various pastoral settings and with diverse populations. Fr. Kappler received his Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (Psy.D.) from John F. Kennedy University, Pleasant Hill CA, and his Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from the Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley CA. In February 2014, he founded KAIROS Psychology Group in Oakland CA and has served as its Director since that time. He has served as Parochial Vicar and Pastor in the Diocese of Oakland since May 1994, with his most recent ministry as Pastor of St. Jarlath Catholic Church in Oakland. Fr. Kappler has facilitated workshops internationally for Religious and Clergy in the area of mental health. He has served on the National Advisory Council (NAC) of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM), and has served as a consultant

for many dioceses. Fr. Kappler speaks fluent English, Spanish, and German.

Fr. Kappler is well known to the Southdown Community, having completed his post-doctoral fellowship with us and offering contract services throughout the past five years. He possesses a deep passion for accompanying fellow Religious and Clergy on their paths of ministry, fulfilling Southdown's vision of *Healthy Ministers for a Healthy Church*. We welcome his expertise to continue strengthening the services Southdown provides to the international Church.



Past Board Chair, Larry Ryan, who served during Sr. Heiderscheit's term, commented, "The Board wishes to sincerely thank Sr. Heiderscheit for her leadership of Southdown over the past five years.

Through Sr. Heiderscheit's stewardship, she developed a joint strategic planning process between the Southdown staff and the Board, initiated Southdown's Annual Benefit Dinner, coordinated the implementation of the Board Emeritus recognizing past Board Chairs, and conducted numerous workshops throughout North America and abroad. The Board is extremely pleased that Sr. Heiderscheit will remain with Southdown, assisting in the change of leadership with Fr. Kappler and continuing her commitment and compassion for Southdown through her gifted outreach skills."

We as a staff welcome Fr. Kappler and look forward to sharing this sacred ministry. ■

FROM MY DESK TO YOURS:



My final column comes to you from the Sonoran Desert in Tucson AZ, mindful of the dangerous weather conditions trapping many parts of the world. Each day I have had the opportunity to experience the unique beauty of its sandy, cactus terrain, view amazing sunrises and sunsets, hear the morning and evening call of the coyote and early birds, and quietly marvel at the never ending wonder of a God who created such diversity in life. Here in the Chapel at the Redemptorist Retreat Center, there is a phrase that states the desert will call you and speak to your heart. What a perfect phrase and image for transitions in our lives. Each experience will lead us anew and speak to us of our strength and resilience.

This time in the desert has been a perfect image for transition. Southdown's transition at this time includes welcoming our new President, Rev. Stephan Kappler, Psy.D. Fr. Kappler's appointment has provided for me an opportunity to shift my focus to a continued position of consultation, facilitation and outreach with the Southdown team.

It has been a gift to provide leadership to the Southdown Community. Over the course of my five-year tenure as Southdown's CEO, I was privileged to welcome and offer support to all residents and to observe the miracle that insight and awareness can create within. I am blessed to have worked with a unique and dedicated staff committed to support all who come to us on this journey to wellness—their enthusiasm and conviction has been an inspiration. There have been many sky, rail, and road kilometers during these years as I have attempted to meet many of you in your local settings or at events, conferences, workshops, or exhibits. It gave me the opportunity to hear your concerns and listen to your wisdom as we serve together with love and compassion for our ministers.

As in all transitions, some components are exciting and pleasant, while others are challenging and require caution or special attention. Early in my years as a mental health practitioner, I presented workshops on the challenges of transition and how to survive this unpredictable period of time in life. I often posted a sign stating: **'PROCEED WITH CAUTION—in danger of growing!'** It continues to amaze me that, regardless of how much one knows, one has to stop and be intentional about transition. A comment from Joan Chittister gives me courage and strength during this time:

Newness is exciting but not always easy to accept. It often takes a great deal of faith to accept change. But then again, newness and change may be one of the few times in life that we really get the chance to believe that God is everywhere even where we've never been before.

— Joan Chittister —

God is where we have never been before. Longing for and looking for God regularly is what our hearts most desire. It may be the surprise of a phone call with unexpected news or just the new physical reality of another day of living. What I do know is that the surprise of any given day holds a gratitude and a gift:

- the satisfaction of having listened to and been present for another person
- the comfort of knowing someone hears my joy, sadness, pain, confusion, anger
- the awesome vision of a moon in various phases
- the delight and beauty of a snowstorm
- the love and compassion for all who are less fortunate than ourselves
- the opportunity to be of service to others
- the joy of having encountered the beauty in another

In the days ahead, I look forward to being of service to you in any way I can. May we continue to be grateful for the many gifts that come our way. You have a promise of my prayers as you continue your own transitions, whether minor or major, simple or complicated, physical or spiritual.

Peace and all Good,

Dorothy Heiderscheit, OSF, MSW, ACSW, RSW

The Ripple Effects of Trauma: Layers of Pain

By Sr. Dorothy Heiderscheit, OSF, MSW, ACSW, RSW
and Rev. Stephan Kappler, Psy.D.



Once again, in the life of our Catholic Church, sexual abuse and its consequences are front and center of day-to-day life: the graphic details from the Philadelphia Grand Jury

Report uncovered the enormity, the depravity, and the horrendous effects of decades of sexual abuse of minors and the subsequent cover-up, international scandals of abuse, the Cardinal McCarrick debacle and his eventual defrocking, and Pope Francis calling a first-of-a-kind Vatican conference on *"The Protection of Minors in the Church"* all build the backdrop to the present situation in the United States, and other ministries around the world. Many dioceses and religious communities have taken the step to publish lists of those credibly accused of sexual misconduct with a minor. The following paragraphs will address the profound psychological impact this has had on so many individuals and communities, identify the multiple layers of pain and stress, and offer coping strategies to help navigate the ripple effects of trauma.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA) and other mental health experts, trauma is an emotional response to a terrible, overwhelmingly negative event, such as an accident, sexual abuse, viewing or experiencing violence, illness or injury, death of a loved one, or natural disaster. Trauma is often, but not always, associated with being present at the site of a trauma-inducing event. However, it is also possible to sustain trauma after witnessing something from a distance, as in secondary traumatic stress and indirect exposure. Immediately after the event, shock, denial, fear, and disbelief are typical. Long term reactions include physical symptoms as well as unpredictable emotions. These can include confusion, anger, rage, irritability, mood swings, anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, self-blame, isolation, sadness, hopelessness, and feeling disconnected or numb/paralyzed.

As you in your dioceses, parishes, and religious communities are faced with the publishing of names of those with credible allegations, and with other sexual abuse-related traumas, you may feel many of these emotions in various levels of intensity. The intensity of your feelings and reactions may be related to your own history of trauma.

Survivors of Abuse

The most immediate and devastating impact of sexual abuse trauma is on the survivors of such abuse. A child (a minor) who has lived through sexual abuse has survived an event that shattered his or her life. The

individual's sense of self, safety, agency, trust, self-love, and power has been profoundly compromised and severely damaged. Many survivors of abuse report an overwhelming sense of shame. Often, this leads to attempts to escape and find ways to numb that shame.

Another consequence of sexual abuse is the struggle with self-blame that many survivors report. Frequently, the survivor of abuse takes on blame and questions if he/she was responsible (i.e. if he/she somehow brought this on, instead of squarely assigning the responsibility to the adult perpetrator). It is very common to see the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and the symptoms can extend far into adulthood. Difficulties with interpersonal relationships, especially building and maintaining intimate and trusting relationships, is often made extremely challenging. For example, as abuse often occurs at the hand of someone in a position of authority, survivors can experience a sense of powerlessness that can persist in the manners in which they view themselves and interact with others. A healthy sense of the person's own developing sense of sexuality has been cut short by the perpetrator imposing his/her adult sexuality, his/her will, using the minor for his/her gratification. Survivors of clergy sexual abuse struggle quite existentially with their faith, their belief in the goodness and meaning of life, and their trust in God.

It is clear that all of us, as a global Catholic Church community, need to continue to acknowledge the pain and suffering caused to so many survivors. We need to continue to work to strengthen our systems so that all are able to enjoy a sacred and safe environment, free of harassment, exploitation, and abuse of any kind. While this article has its focus on the immediate and extended Church communities, in our next *Covenant* edition, we will present an article with its sole focus on psychological issues related to survivors of abuse.

The Immediate Church Community: Brother Priests, Deacons, Seminarians, Religious Sisters and Brothers

For those who have personal knowledge of the accused, whether the accused is living or deceased, the common initial reaction is shock, denial, disbelief, and a sense of confusion. It is often hard to make sense of what seemed unbelievable. Once the realization sets in that there is veracity to the allegation, confusion often gives way to a sense of betrayal, sadness, anger, and shame. The shame is borne out of a distorted sense of responsibility for the actions of a member of your Community or diocesan presbyterate (i.e. you experience taking on the blame). Chronic exposure to

media—global blaming of the entire Catholic Church, condemnation of all priests, questioning the legitimacy of celibacy, negative publication of your congregation, and targeting clergy with a homosexual orientation—can lead to self-blame and loss of confidence, motivation, energy, hope, and perspective.

You may question your response, wondering if loyalty may have clouded a clearer observation or slowed the ability to react quickly and appropriately. Often, shame leads to isolation and forms an obstacle to seeking peer support. Silence prevails and emotions are stifled, censored, or dealt with alone. The seemingly easier way to cope is by numbing the pain. This is where addictive behaviors can begin. Shame can also lead a fellow clergy member or fellow Brother or Sister to question their own vocational choices, or it may even lead to a crisis of faith.

Those who are discerning a vocation and those already in formation may begin questioning the meaning of their vocational choice and may seek to isolate—withdrawing from active engagement with the formation process and the broader community. For those in formation, fear, anxiety, and uncertainty may shut down the courageous and psychologically-necessary exploration of healthy sexuality, affective maturity, and the capacity to make an informed choice to live a chaste/celibate life. This fear, anxiety, and uncertainty may be experienced by the individual in vocational discernment or by the formation personnel.

Priests and members of religious congregations who have previously gone through this situation have reported a sense of unease, anger, confusion, and distrust. This is exacerbated when leaders fail to use policies and procedures in a consistent and transparent manner (i.e. use different disciplinary measures for different groups or members). Often, the process of publishing names of accused, or even the process after an allegation is made and sustained as credible, is driven forward by others. The chancery, the district attorney, law enforcement, review boards, and other groups are moving the process forward, and many times the immediate Church Community experiences a loss of control. Losing a sense of agency often leads to a feeling of powerlessness, exacerbating already heightened and overwhelming emotions.

The Larger Church Community: Parish, Community Served, Surrounding Civic Community

Parishioners, alumni of our parochial schools, benefactors, local civic leaders, neighbors, and Catholics who have left the Church go through various levels of shock, denial, disbelief, a sense of confusion, a sense of betrayal, sadness, and anger. Their relationship with the accused will influence the severity of their

emotional reaction. Families with minor children at the time of learning about a credible accusation may go into a panic mode, analyzing step by step how much exposure their children had to the accuser.

There may be division in the parish—those in firm denial and those who accept the credible nature of the allegation. Whether the truthfulness of an allegation is defended or accepted, varying emotional reactions can be experienced. These reactions can be shame, anger, rage, using isolation, silence, refusal to engage in the topic of conversation, or demands that this be the only conversation important to discuss. Many may feel shaken in their faith, their sense of meaning, their trust in the Church, and may question their active participation and their continued support of the parish, and some may take the decision to leave. The bonds of trust and collaboration built with civic leaders may need revisiting.

Another layer of pain for consideration is that felt by anyone who has survived abuse at the hand of a partner, a family member, or anyone not connected with the Catholic Church. News stories of the credibly accused can open wounds and cause one to revisit the trauma.

Often, shame leads to isolation and forms an obstacle to seeking peer support. Silence prevails and emotions are stifled, censored, or dealt with alone.

Leadership: Bishops and Religious Superiors

Leadership of dioceses, congregations, and Catholic sponsored institutions will recognize the immediate gravity of the situation and experience a variety of feelings including shock, denial, disbelief, anger, and resentment. These feelings can easily be pushed aside to facilitate the critical process of implementing policy and ensuring due diligence. Being the leader puts you on the front line of strong emotions: disgust, anger, overwhelming sadness, intense grief of a life damaged, distress associated with hostility from unknown entities, and a constant request—even demand—for information from the media, the presbyterate, Community members, the families, and any constituents critical to your ministries, including many with whom you are not familiar or associated.

As leadership, you will be consumed with meetings and investigations. Alone time may be filled with self-doubt and questions of how this was not detected—Did a predecessor leave a paper trail?; Did someone know and cover up the information?; Am I doing the right thing?; Do I have the capacity to hold all the angst I am facing each day?; How do I show compassion for the survivor and families?; How do I care and show concern for my Brothers and Sisters?; How can I be present to the person with the allegation? There will also be a struggle to guard and hold information that only you have—information that you are never able to share. There will be the difficult process of weighing so many varying needs, including the needs of your diocese or community, the needs of the survivor(s), the needs of

the public and the larger community, and—not to forget—your own needs. You may have been friends with the accused, may have worked very closely, and you had trust in each other. The experience of disillusionment can be overwhelming, and if unattended, can lead to bitterness and a shutting down of emotions.

Coping Strategies

Dealing with difficult situations, whether you are the leader, the friend, the community member or the family member, is never easy nor simple. Good self-care is critical during these times. Stress affects our immune system as well as our ability to monitor our responses to others in our environment. Illnesses and accidents are not uncommon. Responding to others from our own “less than desirable” manner can only increase our personal stress.

Skills that can assist during this time are best grouped into three areas—physical, spiritual, and social. Everyone is unique in how these areas are addressed; we suggest the following as guiding principles:

Physical:

- Have a good exercise plan. This will aid in burning off unused emotional energy. This can include, at a minimum, walking for at least thirty minutes up to involvement in more vigorous activity that fits your physical ability and interests.
- Get the appropriate amount of sleep. This varies with individuals. If you know you need eight hours of sleep to feel refreshed and renewed, make this your plan at least four nights a week during this process. You are busy during the day with unexpected events and experiences. You may be working or “giving” in excess of 100% of your time, which can push important tasks to later in the evening. In these situations, identify what is essential and set a realistic amount of time to accomplish your tasks.
- Give yourself permission to delegate activities you ordinarily prefer to do yourself. It can be difficult to do this, but allowing others to assist you is appropriate and healthy for you, and for them. We are social creatures and desire to help one another. This provides an opportunity for you to practice accepting support.
- Maintain healthy nutritional practices. It is easy to abandon this during stress. Perhaps your “go to” relief mechanism is comfort food. Sometimes comfort food is good and healthy, but more often than not it is low in nutritional value and high in instant energy, with no substance. Comfort food has the ability to quickly become out of control, resulting in reduced energy, increased lethargy and limited ability to manage emotions or moods. Set aside regular meal times where you are able to sit and enjoy your food. If possible, eat with another person and spend some of that meal time relaxing in some way, especially if it is a meal where you must discuss business. If you

wish some comfort food, restrict or limit the amount you enjoy.

- Monitor alcohol consumption. Alcohol can give an immediate sense of comfort, peace and calm, while affecting sleep and reducing inhibitions.

Spiritual:

- Maintain your ordinary spiritual practices. This can be very challenging. Rote activities generally are easier than personal prayer time. The mind will go to the feelings, the distress, and the helplessness. Some structure in life when addressing stressful situations provides stability and comfort. We know our ordinary prayer practices not only allow us time for quiet and reflection, but also time to center ourselves.
- Structure your personal prayer to assist you. Personal prayer time can be abandoned very easily, while at the same time it will be comforting and strengthening. If you have a routine or rhythm for personal prayer, you may find it is a time of comfort and an activity that you look forward to for setting your tone for the day. Everyone is unique in how prayer is affected. Regardless, it is wise to stay with the practice. Placing feelings, worries, concerns, and anxieties before the Lord strengthens our relationship and offers consolation.
- Meet regularly with a qualified spiritual director. This can assist you in understanding what is deepest in your heart during this time.
- Participate in the celebration of the Sacraments, including the Anointing of the Sick. This can offer spiritual strength and provide a sense of comfort in the midst of such suffering.
- Participate in a silent or directed retreat. This can provide strength and encouragement.

Social:

- Have a strong peer support system. People who have suffered a trauma have greater recovery success if they have positive coping skills including a peer support system. Having a trusted friend to confide in, listen to and receive the confusion and range of emotions will provide support and strength for good mental health.
- Monitor internal thought processes. Self-awareness of internal thought processes will provide an opportunity for evaluating negative distortions and redirect them to productive positive thinking.
- Find a psychotherapist whom you trust. This offers support and clarity to remain balanced and maintain a sense of personal control. For leadership, it is helpful to model healthy emotional regulation and encourage avenues for your members to process their feelings (e.g. support groups, external facilitators for groups, options for support, etc.)

Cont'd

Other coping techniques:

- Take a Minute Meditation break. This can provide the perfect opportunity to calm internal emotions that are bordering on unmanageable.
- Perform a ten-minute full body stretch. This includes tightening the muscles from the toes to the scalp. This will refresh energy and relax you.
- Experience a five-minute gentle mindful movement procedure (i.e. Tai chi). This will improve cognitive control and attention, and increase compassion for others.
- Take a walk in nature. Find a spot to immerse yourself in nature and enjoy the beauty, regardless of the season of the year—snow, sun, wind, or rain. Nature relieves depression, increases creativity, and improves focus and memory.
- Do something altruistic. It may seem “insane” during this time of crisis, yet reaching out to do something kind for others will energize the spirit and increase your sense of self-esteem in the process.
- Find something that recreates you. Dancing, painting, attending a play, listening to music—anything in the world of the arts—will help keep a balance.
- Keep a sense of humor. Laughing and playing recreate the spirit.
- Consider a digital fast or digital time-out. Because there is the never-ending 24/7 cable news cycle

and limitless cyber availability of streaming news stories, time-out is a good self-care strategy. This will diminish the impact and limit your overexposure to negative news.

- Learn active listening skills. This coping mechanism is especially helpful when a good deal of anger and negative emotions are directed at you. When people who have been adversely affected by abuse unload their anger on you, it may be helpful to have this skill to acknowledge the pain and validate the person's anger without taking it on, taking it personal, or getting defensive.

There may be other skills that have assisted you in your life process. The most important concept is to give yourself permission during this time to immerse yourself in the self-care process. This is not being selfish, nor are you denying another of care. Rather, it is assuring you have the resources you need to be of service to all who count on you and to those who care for you and love you.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that, in order for us to be resilient, we need to focus on what we can control and let go of what we cannot. While we cannot control what is being discussed about us in the media or other public venues, we can control and focus our attitude, reactions, and behavior. In this regard, we can all work towards becoming better human beings and better religious and clergy by behaving in an ethical and pastoral manner towards others. ■

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Covenant is produced and published by The Southdown Institute. Its purpose is to inform and educate the readership about clinical issues that surface in our work and to invite integration of the emotional and spiritual aspects of our lives.



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