

Talking points for the film *By the Grace of God*

By the Grace of God is a French film, based on true events, that follows the story of a series of men all who have been abused by the same priest. The story chronicles victims who have fallen away from the faith, but highlights one, Alexandre, who has remained Catholic despite the abuse he suffered. The priest who abused Alexandre, has returned to the area where Alexandre and his family now live. Alexandre along with victims of the abusive priest ban together to make a case against him. The film was released on Friday, October 25th. The film is based on a continuously developing story of a priest in Lyon who has a decades-long record of abusing minors. He is set to face trial in 2020. The priest's superior failed to report the abuse allegations against him to the proper authorities in the 2010s and is now under investigation as well.

The film is a reminder that all Catholics need to remain vigilant to ensure accountability. Also, a reminder that all people affected by the tragic reality of sexual abuse need our prayers. This is an opportunity to raise the awareness of continuous efforts to prevent child sexual abuse in the Church. The Church has made important strides to help ensure the protection of children.

General Thoughts:

1. Acknowledge the reality of the sexual abuse scandal and the changes the Church has made in response
2. Acknowledge the role victims/survivors and journalist played in bringing this issue forward for action
3. Be open, transparent, and truthful about any abuse in the diocese
4. Make sincere apologies to victims/survivors and families
5. Demonstrate the lessons learned; refer to Annual Reports, *Nature and Scope* and *Causes and Context* study, and the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*
6. Remain vigilant; this is a reminder we cannot afford to become complacent
7. Use this as a reminder that the Church teaches that all human life is precious and is to be protected at all levels
8. Refer to the recently released Motu Proprio, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, regarding global reporting standards for sexual abuse
9. Creating a culture of protection and healing is an ongoing process and the Church at all levels must make this a priority

Specifically:

The Church has done many things since the sexual abuse scandal first broke and continues to improve.

1. Approved *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* which includes:
 - Pastoral Care for victims (Article 1)
 - Policies and procedures, review boards (Article 2)
 - Prohibition of confidentiality agreements (Article 3)
 - Requirement to report allegations to public authorities (Article 4)
 - Zero tolerance of sexual abuse (Article 5)
 - Codes of Conduct (Article 6)
 - Open and Transparent Communications about abuse allegations (Article 7)
 - Training adults to create safe environments (Article 12)
 - Training children to recognize grooming behavior and to report it (Article 12)
 - Background evaluations on clergy, adults working with children (Article 13)
 - Prohibition of transfers of clergy who have committed an act of sexual abuse against a minor (Article 14)
 - Ongoing formation of clergy (Article 17)

Locally:

1. Meet with Diocesan Communications to plan a response
2. Let the faithful know the Good News
3. Prepare speaking points for homilies by bishop or pastors
4. Those abused by priests may experience the news of the movie as a reminder of traumatic events and have a negative reaction:
 - As soon as possible, publish information on how to report abuse to church.
 - Publish name of VAC and how to they can be reached in every church bulletin for several weeks.
 - Publish names of those clergy removed because of an established act of child sexual abuse, if the diocese has not already done so.
 - Publish name and phone number of local civil authorities
5. Remind faithful of what the diocese is doing to address clergy sexual abuse:
 - a. Removed priests who offended
 - b. Ongoing support to victims and families
 - c. Training programs; how many have been trained, when the next session is
 - d. Background checks; how many have been done and what the process is
 - e. Diocesan policies and Codes of Conduct that pertain to the safety of children
 - f. Focusing on preventing and addressing boundary violations

6. Acknowledge your participation in the audit and your compliance
7. According to *Darkness to Light*, 1 in 10 children are sexually abused before their 18th birthday. Victims of abuse may be sitting in the pews on any given Sunday. These people may also be reminded of traumatic events in their lives by the movie. Providing support to all abuse victims is an act of charity and love to which we are called.

Nationally:

1. National third-party hotline currently being developed to report bishops to be implemented by the end of May 2020
2. Bishops approving the *Directives on Implementing the Motu Proprio*
3. Remark on the existence/work of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection within the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
4. The National Review Board and the laity's role in advising the bishops
5. Colleges/Universities hosting conferences, symposiums, workshops, on the topic of the sex abuse crisis in the Church.

Internationally:

1. Implementation of the Motu Proprio, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*
2. Vatican Summit on the issue of clergy sexual abuse held in February 2019.