

Establishment of Task Force on Healing, Reconciliation and Hope
Message to University of Scranton Community
from
Rev. Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.
President
Oct. 11, 2018

Dear Members of the University Community,

In late August, I shared the Board of Trustees' response to the release of grand jury proceedings detailing sexual abuse by Catholic priests in Pennsylvania and failures by Church leaders in responding to these situations. As you may recall, the Board approved a series of recommendations for immediate actions that included renaming various campus buildings and revoking honorary degrees.

As I said at the time, however, as important and symbolic as these actions are, the gravity of the information we now know demands even more of us. For this reason, the Board of Trustees also voted to commit endowed funds to support efforts to strive together with the people of the Diocese and Catholics everywhere to address the difficult but necessary questions that arise from the grand jury report.

Today, I am pleased to announce the appointment of a Task Force on Healing, Reconciliation and Hope, which will be co-chaired by Patricia Tetreault, Vice President for Human Resources, and Christian Krokus, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Department Chair of Theology. The Task Force will consist of the following faculty, administrators, staff and students:

Gerianne Barber, Director of the Counseling Training Center
Julie Schumacher Cohen, Director of Community and Government Relations
Debra Pellegrino, Ed.D, Dean of the Panuska College of Professional Studies
Lauren Rivera, Assistant Vice President for Student Life/Dean of Students
James Roberts, Ph.D., Professor and Department Chair of Sociology/Criminal Justice
Patrick Rogers, S.J., Executive Director of the Jesuit Center
Rose Sebastianelli, Ph.D, Professor of Operations and Information Management
Patrick Tully, Ph.D., Professor and Department Chair of Philosophy
Helen Wolf, Ph.D., Executive Director of Campus Ministries
Steven Browning, Graduate Student
Julia Betti, Undergraduate Student.

I place no easy charge before these generous members of our community. I have no illusions that there are quickly found facile solutions to a set of problems rooted in the very mystery of evil. It would be wrong to think so. Nevertheless, there is good work to be done today and together, and the work undertaken by this Task Force will remind us all never to be distracted from the fear and pain of our sisters and brothers who suffered because of the church and its leaders.

As they begin their task, I charge them to chart the path toward healing and hope, ever mindful of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear the Lord. Each of these gifts will be essential to the success of our collective efforts to address the sensitive, complex and daunting challenge that lies ahead.

The Task Force will help us harness the full range of resources that The University of Scranton, as a Catholic and Jesuit university can offer the church in this painful but pivotal moment. Their work will imagine and plan how we can respond, in ways both simple and sophisticated, to the needs of God's people.

While I do not want to preempt or prescribe the work of the Task Force, I do urge them to approach their work as members of a university community. Typically, universities respond to such complex issues through lectures, visiting professors, symposia and other academic endeavors. I imagine they will also engage the University's pastoral and spiritual resources by inviting us to prayer, reflection and listening. In addition, I would urge all members of the community to reach out and share ideas with the members of the Task Force.

Now more than ever, we need the Spirit's inspiration to sustain us in this difficult moment. Moreover, we need the Spirit's inspiration to help us seek and find a possible and plausible future for ourselves, our University and our church.

Please join me in thanking the Task Force members for accepting these added responsibilities in the course of the next two years. Filled with the Holy Spirit, please join me also in praying for our community, our University and our Church.

God Bless Catholic and Jesuit education and God Bless The University of Scranton.

Sincerely,

Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.
President