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Retired adults find new purpose as Ignatian Companions

CHRISTINA GRAY
CATHOLIC SAN FRANCISCO

Mary Yanish wasn't even one year into her retirement after a 40-year career as a licensed clinical social worker when she realized she still had work to do.

"I felt strongly when I retired that the main focus of the last stage of my life was my spiritual development," said Yanish, a lifelong Catholic who had once dreamed of being a contemplative nun.

Catholic San Francisco talked to Yanish Aug. 14 at St. Anne's Home for the elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. She was there to see Gerald Johns, a legally blind, formerly homeless man accurately nicknamed "Smiley," who moved there with her help on Aug. 2. Helping him get off the streets and navigate the practical and spiritual details of his new life at age 68 is one part of her journey as an Ignatian Companion.

Yanish became an Ignatian Companion four years ago after she saw a



Mary Yanish, a St. Ignatius parishioner and retired social worker, right, talks to Gerald Johns, a homeless man whom she helped get off the streets and into a room at St. Anne's Home in San Francisco.

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US bishops to address scandal's 'moral catastrophe'

JULIE ASHER
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON – The president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Aug. 16 announced three key goals and a comprehensive plan to address the "moral catastrophe" of the new abuse scandal hitting the U.S. church.

The plan "will involve the laity, lay experts, the clergy and the Vatican," Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston said. This plan will be presented to the full body of bishops at their general assembly meeting in Baltimore in November.

He said the "substantial involvement of the laity" from law enforcement, psychology and other disciplines will be essential to this process.

He also said that right now, it is clear that "one root cause" of this

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Report details rape of children, culture of secrecy that fanned it

RHINA GUIDOS
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON – The report begins dramatically, imploring its readers: "We, the members of this grand jury, need you to hear this."

Plain and simple, at least 1,000 children identified in the investigation were raped in Catholic places of worship, in schools, and in diocesan owned vehicles, and were "groomed" through diocesan programs and retreats so they could be molested, wrote members of a 23-person grand jury who heard those accounts over



Attorney General Josh Shapiro

But we are not satisfied by the few charges we can bring, which represent only a tiny percentage of all the child abusers we saw. We are sick over all the crimes that will go unpunished and uncompensated. This report is our only recourse. We are going to name their names, and describe what they did – both the sex offenders and those who concealed them. We are going to shine a light on their conduct, because that is what the victims deserve. And we are going to make our recommendations for how the laws should change so that maybe no one will have to conduct another inquiry like this one.

An excerpt from Page 2 of the grand jury report on child abuse in six Pennsylvania dioceses.

a period of almost two years of an investigation of clergy sex abuse said to have taken place in six dioceses in the state of Pennsylvania over 70


years. Their findings were unveiled Aug. 14.

"We believe the real number – of children whose records were lost or who were too afraid to come forward – is in the thousands," the report said.

In almost 1,400 pages, they describe graphic accounts of the abuse they say happened in the Catholic dioceses of Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Allentown, Scranton, Greensburg and Erie.

They detail accounts they heard of boys and girls whose genitals were touched, who were raped or made to perform a variety of sex acts. The report says one priest molested five girls in a family. In some cases the

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GROUP: Abuse scandal exposes 'systemic' issues

FROM PAGE 13

The first goal, Cardinal DiNardo said, is a "full investigation" into "the questions surrounding" Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick, who is accused of sexually abusing a minor almost 50 years ago and allegedly sexually harassed seminarians in more recent times; the second and third goals, respectively, are the opening of new and confidential channels for reporting complaints against bishops, and advocacy for more effective resolution of future complaints. Three criteria, he said, will be followed: proper independence, sufficient authority and substantial leadership by laity."

The signers of the statement posted on dailytheology.org described themselves as active Catholics coming from all walks of life, with many working at various levels of the Catholic Church and Catholics with families:

"(We) teach in Catholic schools, colleges, universities and graduate programs. We work in parishes, retreat centers and diocesan offices. We are parishioners, lay ecclesial ministers, liturgical musicians, catechists, pastoral care workers, youth and young adult ministers, chaplains, parish workers, community advocates, students, teachers, professors, librarians and researchers. We are mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, sons and daughters, vowed religious. We are the baptized."

The statement noted that the grand jury report and its "nauseating clarity" of seven decades of abuse and cover-up "by bishops and others in positions of power" came after the "revelations of decades of sexual predation" allegedly by Archbishop McCarrick and while the church remains "in the long shadow of the sexual abuse crisis in Boston and beyond."

"Systemic sin cannot be ended through individual goodwill," the statement said. "Its wounds are not healed through statements, internal investigations, or public relations campaigns but rather through collective accountability, transparency and truth-telling."

The signers said they "stand in solidarity with the thousands of victims, named and unnamed, whom predatory priests, protected by the willing silence of many bishops, have raped, abused, brainwashed, traumatized and dehumanized."

They also said, "We grieve for our church," as well as for students, children, families, parents, grandparents, friends, neighbors and all of those we love who have left or will leave the Church because they have found its leaders unworthy of trust.

"We grieve for our parishes, communities, schools and dioceses," they said.

Editor's note: The full statement, in English and Spanish, can be found at <https://bit.ly/2BsLqwo>.

COMPANIONS: Retired adults find new purpose in Ignatian group

FROM PAGE 1

notice in the St. Ignatius Parish bulletin announcing the start of a 10-month "service and spirituality" group at St. Agnes's Ignatian Spiritual Life Center.

St. Ignatius and St. Agnes are both Jesuit parishes separated by less than a mile. Ignatian Companions is a program of St. Agnes' Ignatian Spiritual Life Center and is endorsed by the Western Province of the Society of Jesus.

The San Francisco program now in its fifth year, was seeking "mature" Catholic men and women from any parish with the time and desire to serve the poor and marginalized in their communities while immersing themselves in Ignatian spirituality. Yanish became one of them.

According to co-founder Jim Briggs, Companions in Ignatian Service and Spirituality got its start on the campus of Santa Clara University more than a dozen years ago by lay men and women eyeing retirement who wanted to continue to grow in their faith. The former chief of staff to the university president described the program as "contemplatives in action."

"Ignatian Companions are called to direct contact with the poor," he said, often in ways closely related to their professional backgrounds. Retired doctors may serve at free health clinics for the uninsured, for example, and former teachers may tutor the educational disadvantaged.

People moving into the demographic of retirement or semi-retirement want to continue to fulfill their calling outside their professional identity, he said. "Part of the program's discernment is understanding how they have been gifted and how they want to continue to use those gifts."

Ignatian Companions commit to a 10-month program that couples 4-to-8 hours a week of volunteer work of their choice serving the needs of the poor and marginalized in their communities with a group meeting and daily study, prayer and reflection.

The San Francisco group meets at St. Agnes, the East Bay group at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley and the South Bay group at Santa Clara University. On Aug. 25 new and returning members from all groups will begin their new year together at an opening retreat at the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose motherhouse in Fremont.

Facilitated by a Jesuit priest for the first year, the group uses "The Guide for the Journey," a workbook based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

The founder of the Society of Jesus composed the exercises – a set of meditations, prayers and contemplations – to help people discern God's will for them.

Yanish, whose primary service work is with the homeless, said the essence of Ignatian spirituality to her is, "finding God in all things, in all beings."

A lot of people pass the homeless on the street and don't even want to make eye contact, she said.

"I really make an effort to look into the eyes of each homeless man or woman," she said, recognizing their shared humanity in the face of Jesus, an experience can be "transformative."

Johns was one of the hundreds of homeless men and women she encountered each week when she joined the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity at the homeless encampment near Cesar Chavez Street to help serve hot meals.

A Native American, Johns told them his mother was orphaned on a reservation in Oregon and raised in a convent by a group of nuns there. He said he remembered the stories about these Catholic nuns but that he'd never been baptized in the Catholic faith.

Yanish said Johns told the sisters he wanted to "become Catholic and go to Mass every day," and Yanish helped them move mountains to help him do that. He took multiple buses to attend the RCIA program at St. Dominic Church and found a place to sleep afterward wherever he could. This past Holy Saturday, he entered the church, taking the name "Augustine."

Still, Johns remained homeless. Yanish helped him fill out the application for a room at St. Anne's, wrote up a personal history and filled out the mounds of required paperwork, something she had lots of experience doing for patients in the past.

During the process, said Yanish, he asked her if she would be his power of attorney. "I have no one else," he said. "I thought about it for a minute," said Mary, and then said, "Yes, Smiley, yes I will."

For more information visit ignatiancompanions.org.

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Visit Munich, Salzburg, Prague, Krakow, Auschwitz, Warsaw and more

RED MASS: Blesses court year

FROM PAGE 2

humbling to join the past recipients who continually raised the standards of legal achievement while seeking justice for all. I hope in some small way I can continue their trailblazing efforts to achieve a more just society."

Brandi has established scholarships at University of San Francisco School of Law, of which he is an alumnus and current member of the faculty, and schools including St. Ignatius College Preparatory, Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, ICA Cristo Rey and Holy Name School. In 2016, SI awarded Brandi, an alumnus, its Christ the King Award for his contributions to the school and Catholic education. He and his wife, Carol, are parishioners of St. John the Baptist Church in Healdsburg.

Brandi had a huge role in the successful effort some 25 years ago to maintain ministry at Nativity Parish, San Francisco, a spiritual home to Polish, Slovenian and Croat Catholics since 1903 and a worship site very dear to his family especially his late mother Evelyn Brandi, a longtime parishioner of Holy Name of Jesus, San Francisco. He remains as counsel to the state of Slovenia today.

The St. Thomas More Society of San Francisco was founded in 1937 and is the oldest fellowship of Catholic lawyers and judges in the West.

Information about the Mass and purchasing tickets for the dinner that follows is available at www.stthomasmore-sf.org/the-red-mass/.

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