

ISTI Holds First National Conference

When individuals of any community fail in their integrity, everyone is a victim and everyone suffers. Nowhere is this more evident than when clergy and religious compromise leadership and violate their trust through sexual misconduct and other forms of power abuse. This challenge is enormous and can be appropriately met not in secrecy and isolation but in close cooperation among the research and helping professions, law and religion, and the champions of intervention and treatment, by listening carefully to those who are violated by the misuse of power and trust, and attending to their communities and structures of leadership.

The theme of this conference entitled, "After Awareness; Preventing Abuse by Creating Healthy Communities," and experience of the faculty and registrants underscored both the challenge of influencing positive change and the need to work constructively together. Although there is encouraging evidence of progress in implementing policies, much is yet to be done in addressing systemic causes of power abuse that leads to sexual misconduct. Each of the four keynote speakers in turn emphasized the deep religious and social cultural roots which feed abuse as expressed in attitudes about human sexuality, women and men, patriarchy, and the truth.

The heart of the conference was the ISIT Forum and Plenary Discussions where, as members of ISTI, the participants examined from their perspectives what initiatives in the past have worked and what happened as a result, and what needs to be done in the future and what are some realistic objectives.

The Executive Committee of the ISTI Board recognized that the 1998 ISTI national conference exceeded the goal of a "positive learning exchange of openness and hope" by creating not only another significant core consultation base but also an energized community of generous and resourceful people committed to a common resolve.

The hundred and forty participants came from across the country and also Australia, Canada, Ireland, Great Britain, and China. They represented a cross section of religious traditions and interests and welcomed this conference that was cosponsored by the Meadows, an addiction treatment center, Wickenburg, AZ, and with support from the Saint Luke Institute, a resident treatment center, Silver Spring, MD.

Both video (\$15 each set of 4, \$50) and audio (\$8 each, set of 4, \$25) tapes are available of the four keynote addresses: Abbot Timothy Kelly OSB and Ms Phyllis Willerscheidt, "Creating Healthy Communities of Faith"; Dr Patrick Carnes, "The Abduction and Restoration of Trust: The Renewal of Communities of Faith"; Dr Candace Benyei, "Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems"; and Dr Marvin Ellison, "Ethical Eroticism as a Call to Love Fearlessly: Reimaging our Sexuality as our Passion for Justice." Thirty focus sessions are also available on audio cassettes only (at the same price) and will be listed individually in the October issue of The ISI Sun.

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