

LEARNING
RESOURCE

STOLEN LIVES



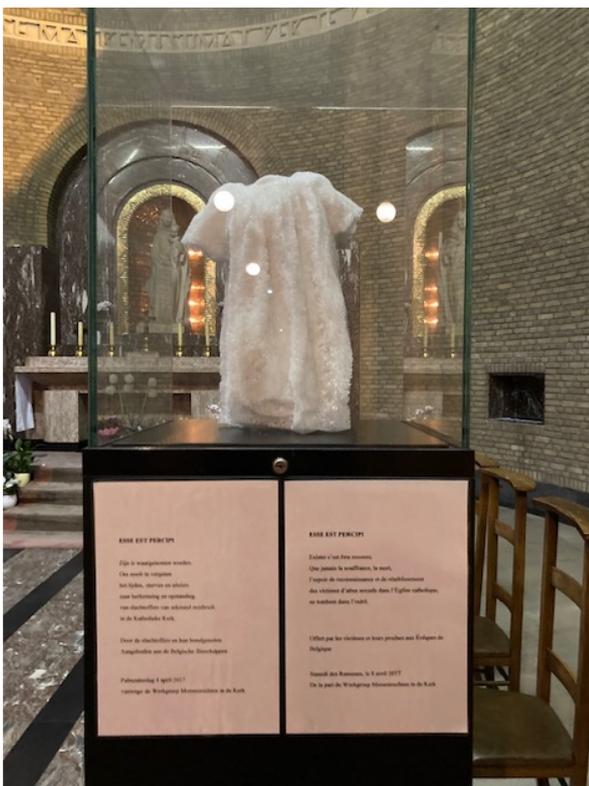
**In solidarity with survivors:
Telling the stories that need to be told**

**root &
branch**



ESSE EST PERCIPI

“Esse est Percipi” (To exist is to be recognized), dedicated to the memory of all victims of sexual abuse committed within the Church. More than 150 people took part in this inauguration, among them many representatives of the Church.



The statue of a child's dress, donated by the victims and their relatives, was unveiled in the middle of the ceremony. Like the ones in Antwerp and Bruges, this work symbolizes the wounded childhood and its fragility.

**Basilica of Koekelberg.
Belgian National Basilica to the
Sacred Heart.**

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Note:

Survivor Stories Resource

These are in a separate document, to be used alongside Activities One to Five

INTRODUCTION

A welcome to the Stolen Lives Learning Resource: in solidarity with survivors

We are deeply grateful to MACSAS (Ministry and Clerical Sexual Abuse Survivors) and Catholic Survivors for supporting us and guiding our planning. It is immensely humbling that survivors of abuse have put their trust in us.

This learning resource is for anyone who wants to understand more about the abuse of power in the Catholic Church and its impact on victims and survivors. It's also for anyone who wants to contribute to making the Church a safe, inclusive and just Church.

What do Root & Branch and Scottish Laity Network offer?

Many of us are part of these movements because we follow in Jesus' footsteps to bring about his Kingdom. We find hope and consolation and experience the love of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit within us when we gather. See more on Root & Branch and our partners in Stolen Lives, Scottish Laity Network, in Appendix II.

Our allies

We value our Church and love much that is good, finding strength through the lay people, clergy and religious that have inspired us. Caring, loving and Jesus-centred cultures exist alongside corrupt abuse and cover-up. Many priests and religious feel like we do, they are our valued allies in bringing abuse and institutional cover-up to light. They too have suffered sexual violence, physical, emotional and spiritual abuse at the hands of the more powerful. You will hear their voices in the recordings and in the accompanying document: 'Survivor Stories Resource'.

Our responsibilities

We also realise that we all have a responsibility for the way power is exercised in the Church. The Church must embark on a world-wide 'process of truth and reparation [beginning] with the acknowledgement of responsibility'. (Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (CIASE), France – Summary document page 13)

We believe that if the Church is to move forward towards a safe and just institution, the scale and extent of abuse and its impact on children, young people and adults must be confronted, repented and the institution fundamentally reformed. We do this in the knowledge that Church law reminds us that

'The Christian faithful have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters that obtain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known.' (Canon Law 212.3)

There are no excuses for the corruption in the clerical system that has led to the betrayal of trust and cover-up. Real and lasting changes to structures, culture and attitudes have a long way to go if the Roman Catholic Church is to shake off the failures of the past and present. Change must begin with a clear understanding of the depth of institutional failures and of the nature of systemic abuse and cover up.

We are deeply ashamed that our Church has been strongly criticised by investigatory bodies in the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, North and South America, Australia and the Indian subcontinent. The abuse scandal has damaged us all. There is absolutely no room for complacency or pretending that 'we didn't know'. We can't dismiss abuse as the actions of a few wicked individuals.

Silence is not a neutral act, yet many ordinary Catholics are unaware of the extent to which the Church's behaviour has been and is counter to gospel values. Many others have left the Church in shame and anger at the betrayal of children and adults, including adults that have additional needs. We hope that this resource will increase understanding of how our responses as 'laity' must challenge toxic cultures of violence, abuse and cover-up.

Pope Francis, in a speech delivered at the close of the final Mass for the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church, 2019

“

'We are thus facing a universal problem, tragically present almost everywhere, and affecting everyone. Yet we need to be clear that while gravely affecting our societies, this evil is in no way less monstrous when it takes place within the Church. Indeed, the brutality of this worldwide phenomenon becomes all the more grave and scandalous in the Church, for it is utterly incompatible with her moral authority and ethical credibility.

The Church feels called to combat this evil that strikes at the very heart of her mission, which is to preach the Gospel to the little ones and to protect them from ravenous wolves.

We hope that these resources will help you to understand how our responses as 'laity' can either support and enable or challenge a toxic culture of abuse and cover-up.

Root & Branch are committed to putting survivors at the centre of all that we do. This learning resource has been prepared in partnership with our wise survivor advisors who were the inspiration behind our series of talks 'Stolen Lives' held online in January and February 2022. Survivors' stories and their treatment by Church authorities are at the heart of this Learning Resource. We urge you to spend some time reflecting on and praying about the stories told here in the recordings and in print.

Many more stories are widely available on the internet. We've searched to find stories from Africa and the Far East, but these have yet to surface through inquiries and investigations but surface they will. We would welcome any additional stories.

This freely available resource is one of our contributions to the process of recognition, reparation, healing and systemic change.

The steps on our journey

We identify **four steps** on our journey of understanding and this resource is structured to follow these four steps, with a **fifth activity** to help you drill down deeper into published reports, books and speeches:

1

Recognising the experience and impact of clerical abuse.

Activity One: Part I, Part II

2

Asking how far does clericalism underpin the abuse of power?

Activity Two: Part I, Part II

3

Seeing the need for large-scale cultural change and how it can really take root.

Activity Three

4

Moving forward and understanding that we, the People of God, are the change.

Activity Four

5

Exploring how abuse of power is described and defined.

Activity Five

**WE CAN EMPOWER
OURSELVES IN
SOLIDARITY WITH
SURVIVORS**



HOW CAN THE RESOURCE BE USED?

Individuals, small groups or parish communities can use this learning resource to widen their understanding.

Trainers in safeguarding can also use this as a training resource. We hope that diocesan safeguarding managers will find it helpful as part of their training responsibilities.

Teachers might want to use parts of the resource for A levels or other examination courses.

The four talks, together with further reading material, have an international application. However, the resource also contains some material relating to the English and Welsh Justice systems and government commissioned inquiries. These items are indicated with a **symbol**:



If you wish to use the materials outside of the United Kingdom, you may wish to replace some of the resources with locally applicable materials.

Music

You will find the music that we used during our four talks - 'Broken'. We are very grateful that the writer and performer of this song, Marie Louise Cochrane, has given us the permission to include it in this Learning Resource. [Click here >>>](#)



Listeners might find survivors' testimonies upsetting and distressing.

We hope that everyone studying our resources will be able to do so in a safe and supportive setting. So, we ask that you'll be mindful about your contributions and the impact that they might have on others.

If you're sharing information that isn't already in the public domain, please be careful not to name others.

If during your discussion, it becomes clear that a child(ren) or vulnerable adult(s) is/are being harmed and this is not being dealt with by the appropriate protection authorities, remember that you must not agree to keep this confidential. Explain your moral and legal obligation to report this to the appropriate authorities.

Support for survivors, their families, and friends

Paul Campbell from Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors (MACSAS) has been involved in the preparation for the talks and this learning resource. Here he speaks about support for victims, survivors, family and friends: [Click here >>>](#)



Resources for Support and Information

MACSAS – Minister and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors (UK)

Website: macsas.org.uk
Helpline: 08088 01 03 40

Contact: support@macsas.org.uk
Sat 9-11.30am, Wed 7-9.30pm

Survivors Voices – Pain into Power (UK)

Website: survivorsvoices.org
Private Facebook group, on-line peer groups, national gatherings and special events

Contact: connect@survivorsvoices.org

Safe Spaces – Church of England/Catholic Survivors (UK)

Website: safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk
Helpline: 0300 3031056
Live chat, advocacy and online resources

Contact: safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk
Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Thurs 12-8pm

SNAP – Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests – International

Website: snapnetwork.org

Ways to use this resource

Some groups might find it helpful to use a format of prayer, learning, discussion and action planning. You might like to look at a format on the Root & Branch website for holding what we call an R&B DIY group.

More information can be found at: www.rootandbranchsynod.org/diy

Suggested format for a learning session:

- An opening prayer or blessing. You might want to pray in silence or ask someone to pray spontaneously
- An activity from this Learning Resource (either watch a recording or read a section)
- Reflections and discussions, remembering to allow enough time for all those who wish to speak to do so
- Action planning: what have we learned and how will we apply this in our lives and Church?
- A closing prayer or blessing

Additional resources

- This Learning Resource should be used with the accompanying ‘Survivor Stories Resource’.
- There are prayers, some of which were written specially for Stolen Lives, as well as blessings and a Healing Service in Appendix I.
- Further reading: From time to time, we’ll be adding more resources that will supplement this learning resource.

ACTIVITY ONE - Part 1

Recognising the experience and impact of clerical abuse.

Challenging the abuse of power in the Catholic Church - the survivors' perspective

Duration: 1:13:34

[Click here >>>](#)



The recording begins with two survivor-witnesses in conversation with journalist Catherine Deveney.

A711 (described as Anne in the video) is a female survivor of clerical sexual violence who courageously gave evidence about both her original and her 'retraumatising' experiences of abuse to the Independent Investigation Child Sexual Abuse (England & Wales).

Brian Devlin is author of the recently published **Cardinal Sin: Challenging Power Abuse in the Catholic Church**. He was a priest in Edinburgh but left the priesthood a year after ordination when his abuser Keith O'Brien was appointed as his archbishop. He and three other men decided to go public with their story when it became clear that his abuser would be part of the conclave that elected Pope Francis.

A well-respected Scottish journalist and author, Catherine Deveney broke the story of Scottish Cardinal Keith O'Brien's sexual hypocrisy and predatory behaviour.

Listen to the recording of this talk:

We suggest that you listen with your heart and your head to Brian and Anne's experiences

Reactions and discussion -

You might find the following questions helpful in guiding your discussions

1. What was the impact of abuse and its effects on Anne and Brian's lives?
2. How difficult was it for Brian and Anne to report their abuse to Church authorities?
3. How far did Church authorities react with sensitivity and acknowledgement to them?
4. What is the impact on you as participant(s) of hearing their stories?
5. Brian speaks of 'the laity's' role to 'mind the church'. How might you do this?
6. How might you work for the changes that A711 and Brian wish to see?

Some notes on the impact of abuse on survivors, to supplement the video presentation.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Many survivors experience PTSD, which can go unrecognised. PTSD often leads to later problems such as flashbacks, insomnia, depression, substance abuse, destructive behaviour and problems in forming new relationships. Since many victims may be unable to share what happened to them until years afterward, they may not get the right sort of help until decades later (if at all). Other people may be completely unaware of the effects of flashbacks on emotional health. Survivors report that they've been told that they are 'fine' and that as the abuse happened some time ago why do they keep raising it?

Damaged and ruined lives

Survivors describe the long term impact of being abused. Their sense of identity is fragmented and fragile. Some use drugs and/or alcohol to try to numb the emotional pain they experience. Homelessness is also a feature. Others commit offences, including violence which can sometimes lead to prison sentences. Many have had periods of serious mental illness including depression and self harm; a few take their own lives. Relationships are significantly affected by a lack of trust; no-one came to their rescue. Some survivors blame themselves for the abuse taking place.

Facing disbelief from family and silence and secrecy from the Church

This can make it easy for the offending clergy to continue their abuse. The Catholic Church, along with virtually every other religious organisation charged with policing clergy, has a long history of concealing sexually inappropriate behaviour by priests or religious.

Being shunned by their parish or other communities

Fear of this often intimidates other victims into staying silent. Even if the victim is believed, members of the religious community can hold them responsible for the abuse due to the absolute trust they have in their faith and in the offending clergy.

A sense of betrayal and mistrust that often extends to all other adults in their lives

Being abused by clergy can be particularly devastating. Considering that clergy are seen as the moral core of any religious community, taking advantage of this position of trust to commit sexual or other abuse, often over long periods of time, can lead victims to become much more cynical towards all other adults in their lives.

Difficulty forming relationships even years after their abuse

Being abused is often accompanied by feelings of guilt over what happened and the belief that their own actions somehow led to the abuse.

Feeling shame, depression, and helplessness

Since most victims prefer not to divulge their abuse, at least for a while, they are often alone in dealing with the shame and sense of helplessness that comes with what they have experienced.

Their testimonies being dismissed as 'false memories' and finding themselves 'on trial'

Given that abuse often occurred when victims were much younger, they may have difficulty recalling specific details. If giving testimony in a courtroom, they may face harsh grilling by lawyers accusing them of making up the abuse. Their memories can be contaminated by all of the extensive media coverage surrounding clergy abuse.

Surviving and thriving

Survivors also describe how they found and sustained resilience to deal with the trauma of abuse. The availability of skilled therapeutic help is very significant to help survivors travel the journey from victim to survivor and to live transformed lives.

Others found that continuing or returning to education was significant and finding the right sort of employment brought financial stability. Building strong and safe friendships and relationships also have a huge positive effect on sustaining resilience.

Nevertheless, survivors report that stress and adverse life events can still trigger recurrences of distress.

Catholic survivors also mention the impact of being abused by a priest or minister, who is presented to them as an 'alter Christus' (another Christ) when administering the Sacraments. This is the utmost spiritual violation of a trusted relationship and a sacred trust in the person who has been seen as representing God. The impact of abuse for many people is the destruction of their religious faith.



ACTIVITY ONE - Part 2

Recognising the experience and impact of clerical abuse.

More stories from Survivors, shared with us

'Going to Church Mass is a trigger, reading scriptures is a trigger, praying the rosary is a trigger. I still have nightmares....'

Spend some time reading a selection of other first-hand accounts from the Survivor Stories in order to broaden your understanding of the impact of clerical abuse.

'That feeling of being a bad person lasted for many, many years, panic attacks, anxieties, hospitalisation for depression. I saw the archbishop saying that the Church was doing all they could, but I knew that was not true. By protecting abusers, bishops are complicit in the abuse.'

Read Jenny's story to understand how important it is for lay people to understand how they can make it harder for survivors.

Jenny's story shared with Root & Branch:

“

As part of the global synodal consultation process I heard one of the key figures charged with explaining the process in England and Wales, a priest, tell a diocesan meeting, “We’re not saying bad things haven’t happened, they have, but ...” and swiftly moved his focus on to “evangelisation”.

As someone with the experience I’ve had, I hear comments like that and think “they STILL don’t get it” - so many demonstrate from what they say and the way they say it that they haven’t a clue about the ongoing effects on people’s lives of abusive behaviour in the Church. The effects of the abuse are minimised, and the approach seems to be that “it’s time to move on”. I am incredibly grateful that Root & Branch has listened, is trying to work with survivors to understand and ask how to help.

Part of the difficulty for survivors is, not just a feeling of being cut off and abandoned by the Church hierarchy but feeling that it’s fellow parishioners who have also “not wanted to know” - because they can’t face listening to survivors - or can’t face really thinking about what changes are needed to change a culture where abuse may be more likely to happen.

On quite a number of occasions I’ve had to get up and get out of Mass, if my legs haven’t got too shaky to carry me. Because of past experiences it’s difficult to know exactly what’s triggering such a strong visceral reaction. I’m glad I’m now in a position where I will get up and go out of Mass if I suddenly need to - unless my legs have gotten so shaky, I’m just sat there paralysed.

Francis' story explains something of the serious impact on emotional health.

Read Francis's story of growing up in 'care' as told to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry www.childabuseinquiry.scot

“

Another home – Nazareth House, Lasswade or Bonnyrigg I have a memory of driving up towards gates. The big gates opened up and there was a little gate house. I don't know where this is. I don't even have a memory or picture in my mind of the home. This is where it gets dark in my mind as I'm going up this road. When I say it goes dark, I see fire and darkness. There is fear, and something in my mind is saying that I am not going in there because something bad happened. It goes satanic. It means that I saw or heard something at that point. It doesn't necessarily mean something happened to me although it could have. It is complete darkness. This may well be the start of my abuse, but I can't know this until I get some clarification.

My thoughts tell me I was abused in this place. I think this because the picture of NH is clear in my mind, and I know that I am not at St Ninians yet. There are phases of darkness at St Ninians, but I remember things from there. I have no picture in my mind of this place. I don't know how long I was there for. I see flashbacks of it, and it has big walls that you can't see over.

Patrick challenges us 'as laity' to think about our role in maintaining the conditions in which abuse flourishes.

Read the story Patrick Mills has shared with Root & Branch. He doesn't want to be anonymous.

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As a child, I was unofficially indentured into a sexually abusive Catholic world of clergy, religious orders and laity until I escaped at age sixteen. The impact it's had on me was to turn lead into gold as a successful commercial writer, drawing on Catholic abuse for inspiration.

Maybe that's why it didn't scar me with drugs or alcohol, but it certainly scarred me in all the other obvious ways - PTSD, sleep issues and so forth. But in recent years that alchemy has been a double-edged sword because it's made me increasingly militant on exposing a number of issues which are usually ignored - such as the evils of Canon Law.

In fact, there are two areas where I think no one in the UK, at least, is pursuing, even though it's been proven elsewhere in the world. Namely, the sexually abusive role of the Catholic laity who currently are presented as shocked and innocent bystanders. And the existence of Catholic clergy and laity paedophile rings - organised systemic sexual abuse. I've presented evidence on to Safeguarding who have passed it to the police.

But the downside and the impact to me is the distraction from the rest of my life which is otherwise excellent. Thus, I was recently instrumental in the current suspension of the head of a Catholic religious order, which was cathartic, but it's all an enormous time suck and I have so much better and nicer things to do with my time than pursue these monsters. My soul disagrees with me and so I have to continue with my website acting on behalf of other survivors as well as myself. It's a positive impact, but I could still do without it!

None of this is confidential and I don't care about being anonymous. As a survivor, I see going public is like coming out of the closet. We have to do it, to emphasise that it's the abusers who need to feel shame, not us. Anything else you'd like to know, very happy to help. After a childhood of secrecy and abuse, I believe in full transparency.

Surviving, thriving against the odds and reflecting

'Jack' a survivor of sexual abuse at a boarding school - On leaving school his life spiralled out of control. A life that was dominated by drink and drugs and culminated in him living on the streets of London for about two years. He managed to transform his life, including obtaining a degree in politics. He became involved with the army cadets, where he eventually achieved a leadership role. This role provided him with the opportunity to promote the children that he supervised in a way that allowed them to flourish. He was able to draw upon his own negative experiences as a child to ensure that the children he had contact with had positive experiences. In his evidence he stressed the importance of child protection.

He concluded with these words: 'Can I just say one thing? One thing that I would say is that the real problem where a lot of this kind of abuse stuff in the past has been individuals, and this includes the Catholic Church, for whatever level, and in my time in the cadets as well as anywhere else, that people have been more likely to protect the organisation than they were to protect the child...in recent years when people were reporting stuff to the church, the biggest problem they had is people were brushing things under the carpet to protect the organisation. The Catholic Church was more important, the cadets were more important, whatever. It was obviously wrong. The purpose is to protect the child. You need to look beyond the situation and protect the child. Regardless of who falls, the child must be protected'.

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, Case Study no. 7. <https://www.childabuseinquiry.scot/>

Reactions and discussion -

You might find the following questions helpful in guiding your discussions

1. Imagine what it would be like if the Mass, the rosary, Church buildings, even bible readings were triggers to your nightmares. How might you react?
2. Thinking back to before you started using this Learning Resource, how different is your understanding of the impact on survivors and victims of clerical abuse?
3. Explore your understanding of what Patrick Mills refers to the 'sexually abusive role of the Catholic laity who currently are presented as shocked and innocent bystanders', explore your understanding of what he might be referring to. What implications for action does this have?
4. Consider the dilemmas and difficulties that Survivors face when they make their experience of abuse public. How could the reactions of family, friends and other Catholics be supportive and understanding?
5. Jack told the inquiry, 'You need to look beyond the situation and protect the child. Regardless of who falls, the child must be protected'. What do you consider to be the key elements of an effective church strategy to protect children?

ACTIVITY TWO - Part 1

How far does clericalism underpin abuse of power?

An overview of abuse and corruption in the Catholic Church and the underpinning causes - Tom Doyle

Duration: 1:06:18

[Click here >>>](#)



Tom is a Dominican priest, Canon Lawyer and American Airforce pilot with over 35 years' experience of relentlessly challenging sexual violence and abuse in the Catholic Church. He advised members of the Vatican's 2015 Pontifical Commission which investigated clergy sexual abuse. Tom works tirelessly on behalf of survivors and as an expert witness for them.

Some of the issues you'll hear about

- The history of abuse and corruption in the Church
- How core theological teachings enable sexual abuse
- The clash of values within the Church: human dignity, compassion and justice for all versus image, protection of reputation and prestige
- The way that violators and violated are treated by the hierarchy and clergy. The toxic response to victims and survivors
- What we must do to create change

Listen to the recording of this talk

Reflection and discussion

Tom makes a number of challenging statements that you might wish to reflect on and discuss:

1. An 'honest look at Church history' shows that abuse and corruption are 'embedded' in the institutional Church.'
2. 'Anyone who believes that the sexual abuse of a child is not harmful is utterly wrong'.
3. There is a 'clash of values' between Gospel based values and the value system of the institutional Church.'
4. 'For the good of the Church' is a dangerous concept in relation to dealing with the abuse of power and sexual violence. They knew what they were doing'. How do you feel about silencing abuse allegations 'for the good of the Church'?
5. 'This issue will not change unless the system that created and sustains toxic Church responses to sexual abuse has to change in its very essence'.
6. In talking about the causes of abuse, Tom comments that 'celibacy of itself is not the point'. Tom calculates that the Church is governed by about 3,000 men and describes, at different points in his talk, several damaging features of the Church authorities' responses to victims and survivors. What are these features?

ACTIVITY TWO - Part 2

How far does clericalism underpin the abuse of power?

The different forms of misuse and abuse of power

Introduction

So many Catholics find it hard to believe that criminal sexual violence alongside physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse could truly have happened for so long within our Church. It can be very hard to face this reality and the consequences of knowing more, especially we will likely have met emotionally intelligent, caring and spiritual pastors and religious who have devoted themselves to the Church, their parishes and their people.

The reality of abuse in the Catholic Church

The 'Survivor Stories' document contains many contributions from survivors of all types of abuse and violence that have been reported over the last 60 years. The examples are mainly from Western Europe, North America, and Australia. There is much less material available from Africa, South and Central America and parts of Asia. This is not to say that the abuse of power is not endemic in these continents, but that due to the complexity of historical, cultural and Church-related factors, many of these stories are yet to emerge.

Many of us will have experience of clerical authority being used for the good of a parish or diocese or alternatively misused or abused.

Clericalism and its relationship to abuse

You'll hear several references to the role that clericalism plays in setting the context in which abuse occurs.

Gerald Arbuckle, award-winning author of many books including **Abuse and Coverup: Refounding the Catholic Church in Trauma**, Orbis Books, 2019, describes clericalism as

'The idealisation of priesthood that produces entitlement, superiority and exclusion'.

Pope Francis refers to clericalism as:

“

An elitist and exclusivist vision of vocation, that interprets the ministry received as a power to be exercised rather than as a free and generous service to be given. This leads us to believe that we belong to a group that has all the answers and no longer needs to listen or learn anything. Clericalism is a perversion and is the root of many evils in the Church: we must humbly ask forgiveness for this and above all create the conditions so that it is not repeated.

Address to the Synod Fathers at Opening of Synod 2018 on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.

Clericalism creates a climate of deference, because the Church traditionally teaches that a priest becomes 'alter Christus' (another Christ) through ordination when they celebrate the sacraments, and it is from this position that they derive their authority and power.

The assumption is of superiority. We see this reflected in the fact that the worst punishment for a priest (short of excommunication) permitted by Canon Law is 'the reduction to the lay state'. Priests and religious are organised into a hierarchy (ranked according to relative importance, status or authority).

'The only legislator in a diocesan synod is the diocesan bishop; the other members of the synod possess only a consultative vote. Only he signs the synodal declarations and decrees, which can be published by his authority alone.'

Book II, The People of God, Canon 466

'A pastoral council possesses only a consultative vote. It belongs to the diocesan bishop alone to convoke it according to the needs of the apostolate and to preside over it; it also belongs to him alone to make public what has been done in the council.'

Book II, The People of God, Canon 514

Within this clericalist culture, it is easy for a myth to be maintained that lay men and especially women are inferior, nuns are inferior to priests etc. Other myths such as 'priests don't sin', 'priests don't have sexual feelings' are also reinforced by their special status: calling them 'Father', reserving vestments and traditions for themselves alone.

In this Church environment power and formal authority can be misused and abused

- It can take more than 25 years for a victim to feel able to report their abuse. Therefore, we cannot be complacent that abuse crimes have been tackled; we don't know how long children and adults being abused now will take to report their abuse.
- Abusers misuse power to cynically manipulate their victims.
- Clerical abusers enforce their victims silence 'nobody will believe your word against mine', 'this is our secret'. This is intended to buy their victims' silence.
- Victims and their families are groomed and singled out as important. Parents and carers are pleased that a person of such importance has chosen their son or daughter to be special.

Cover - Up culture

Many of those in authority, whether they are parish priests or more often those occupying the higher positions in the hierarchy, behave defensively and protectively to guard the Church's reputation. Protection of image is at the root of corrupt cover-up. There are promises to deal with abuse 'in house,' as sanctioned by Canon Law. Criminal behaviour is rarely reported to the proper state authorities. Abusive priests are often moved without disclosing their abusive behaviour. **Read the extract from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, published 14 August 2018 that found more than 300 priests in six dioceses across the State had sexually abused children.**

Is clericalism new?

We know that clericalism developed as far back as the fourth century CDE/AD when the Church claimed special privileges to fall into line with pagan religions. The Church began to adopt uniforms (vestments), the use of the royal colour purple and the use of Reverend or ‘O revered one’ as well as expecting deference from lay people and clerics lower down in the Church power structures (hierarchy).

Tom O’Loughlin describes ‘The Culture of Deference’ in the extract below:

“ Deference has been a feature of Christian life at least since the time of the Synod of Elvira (306 AD) when Christian ministers began to claim the special privileges that Roman culture granted to the pagan priesthoods (sacerdotia), such as the flamines and the pontifices. (Note that this occurred before Constantine’s Edict of Toleration in 311 AD.) Indeed, very soon these titles were adopted by Christian ministers. They called themselves sacerdotes (and justified this by an unfounded appeal to the Old Testament) and pontifices. We still call the book of ceremonies used by bishops the “Pontifical” and refer to the Bishop of Rome as the “Supreme Pontiff”. Along with the titles went the uniforms -- the heel-length gown (vesta talaris usually called a soutane or cassock in English) that is still used by those ministers who like being clerics. The use of purple – look at the trimming on the soutanes of monsignori and bishops – and the use of the title “reverend” (literally: O revered one) also comes from this ancient imperial culture of deference.

Tom O’Loughlin also suggests a way forward:

“ We have a variety of ministries in the Church. We have to learn anew how to respect these differences without appealing to the modes of deference. We are seeking to become a synodal Church, but the assumption of every synod is that all who meet at “the cross-roads” (the synodos) do so on a level-playing field. If we try to become synodal while ignoring the fact that many of the laity involved no longer live in a world of deference, then the process will lead to resentment, frustration, and rejection. Hope or Trap?

We need to make a virtue of living in a post-deference society.

If you miss that – for instance people deferring to you or greeting you by kissing your ring – then that is sad! If we go into the synodal process without this virtue of post-deferential relationships with others, this process (on which many are pinning their hopes for the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church) will lead to the alienation of many of the very Christians we need for our renewal.’

Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/synodality-virtues-a-culture-of-non-deference/15492> January 17 2022, La Croix



Suggestions for using this activity

It is important that we all understand the many ways in which power is misused and abused within the clericalist culture of the Catholic Church. Sexual violence along with the irreparable damage it inflicts on survivors has strongly featured in our four talks. However, there are many other forms of abuse that survivors report.

Survivors include children, lay women and men, religious sisters and brothers and priests. There are many types of emotional, physical, spiritual abuse and neglect that we need to be aware of.

This activity highlights the nature and impact of these abuses, all of which we suggest are rooted in the institutional culture of the church.

From the information below choose one or two forms of abuse and read the Survivor Stories connected with them to understand their impact.

Three questions that might help to structure your discussions.

1. Reflect on what you have read. How far does this form of abuse connect to your lived experiences?
2. How far do the forms of abuse share features in common? In what ways do they seem different?
3. What would need to happen to make sure that abuse (oftype) can be prevented?

We will begin with everyday experiences.

The misuse of everyday power and authority

Whilst the victims of violent crimes and abuse can be anyone: female, male, children, young people or adults, laity or religious in all parts of the world, the culture of clericalism and the all-powerful male-only priesthood is the underlying context common to all types of clerical abuse.

Abuse of power is not always sexual. In any hierarchical institution there is scope for power to be mis-used. It is likely that those in positions of power in the Church might not even be aware that their behaviour is experienced as abusive, especially if the power is invested in them by Canon Law.

Reactions and discussion

Consider and share day-to-day examples of misuse and abuse of power you may have experienced

1. Root & Branchers have reported their parish priests saying 'I am in charge of this parish, and I'll decide if there's to be a meeting or not' – how far have you felt helplessness against this sort of authority?
2. How do you feel about the expectation to call a priest 'Father'? Consider those people who find hearing an abusive priest or an abusive nun being called 'Father' 'Sister' or 'Mother' deeply distressing. Or those who have been abused by their male parent being traumatised by having to call anyone 'father'.
3. How does it make you feel when some one says 'Father always knows best'? Discuss possible ways of responding to this and similar comments.
4. Much of church language, biblical translations and liturgy assumes that 'men' is inclusive of wo(men) How far do you see this as an example of exclusion and misuse of power?
5. What experiences can you describe that show power and authority being used for good in an inclusive and just way and in what contexts?

Read the stories by Christine, Sushila and Monica.



Increase your understanding of different forms of abuse within our Church.

Sexual and physical crimes of violence

Sexual abuse is multi-faceted and covers a wide range of abuses, all of which in many jurisdictions are also crimes. Male and female children and vulnerable adults have suffered grooming, rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touching, sexting, and using power and privilege to gain sexual favours.

Sexual abuse is often associated with other forms of abuse, spiritual and emotional, and beatings, grievous bodily harm and torture by clerics and religious at all levels of the hierarchy. Survivors describe feeling like it ‘was God that was doing this to me’. There is also non-contact abuse when on-line images of child sexual abuse are viewed or shared, or the abuser sends unwelcome and explicit sexual texts.

Read Kaylin’s, Leonard’s and Freya’s story.



Senior clerics and religious grievously abuse their positions of authority and trust

Some seminarians, postulants, nuns and younger priests are forced to ‘comply’ with spiritual, sexual and physical abuse, as in the cases of the late Cardinal Keith O’Brien of Scotland and the former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Boston, USA. This form of abuse is often widely known about and tacitly accepted as part of the institutional culture. We must ask ourselves, why was it tolerated?

Brian Devlin shared his experiences in Activity One: Part I, as a powerful example of exposing sexual hypocrisy.

Also read Sister Mary’s story.

Women religious report being raped or sexually assaulted by priests and bishops

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/news/news/sisters-record-testimony-trial-indian-bishop-accused-raping-nun>

Abuse of nuns by the Church has existed since the Middle Ages but remained a ‘secret’. Many of the women religious are working ‘for’ or ‘alongside’ their abusers. Reports have confirmed that priests in Africa, afraid of contracting HIV, use them as ‘wives’. The sexual abuse of religious sisters was only publicly acknowledged by Pope Francis in 2019, although it had been exposed in 1994 by an Irish nun, Sister Maura O’Donoghue, whose report covered more than 20 countries, mostly in Africa, but also in Ireland, Italy, the Philippines and the United States.

A #NunsToo movement has emerged. Courageous female religious reporting rape face silence, condemnation, and isolation. Abusers compound the oppression by blaming their victims for seducing a priest. Raped nuns when made pregnant have been cast out from their orders. It is also reported that some priests have forced their victims to have abortions.

Read the interview in La Croix, Sr Josee Ngalula, a Sister of St Andrew, from Democratic Republic of Congo

Sr Josee is the first-ever African woman to be a member of the International Theological Commission (ITC) has written powerfully about this. A professor of dogmatic theology at several institutes in Africa, she also provides pastoral accompaniment to victims of Church-related sexual abuse.

Lucie Sarr in La Croix, 30 November 2021.

Read or listen to two interviews. The first is with Dr. Doris Wagner Reisinger former nun and survivor of clerical sexual abuse and rape. The second, is with editor Lucetta Scaraffia and Sister Catherine Aubin of Women Church World, a women's supplement to the official Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano. describing women's treatment inside the male Vatican world this way: "We are unobserved, invisible, ignored and not respected."

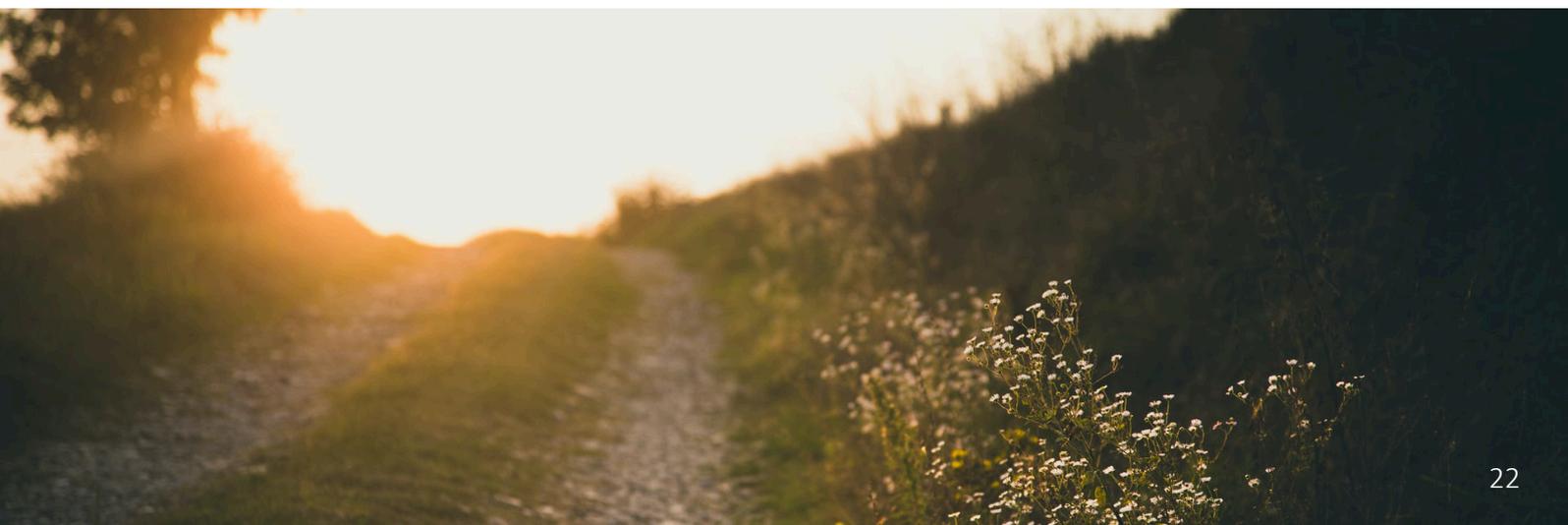
Article: 'After years of abuse by priests, nuns too are speaking out' - [click here >>>](#)

Secondary abuse is experienced when victims report their abuse to Church authorities

Corruption and cover-up have characterised the response of Church authorities in many parts of the world. When victims report their abuse to the Church they are met with silence, denial, victim-blaming and discrediting, many are told 'they are only after money'. Many victims report that this is worse than the original abuse with the clerics whom they trusted to help them re-abusing them through by the way they respond to the disclosure.

Anne's account of her experiences at the hands of Church authorities in the video recording in Activity One: Part I is a powerful example of re-abuse. Anne is not her real name.

Read Dora's story and the extract from the Pennsylvanian Grand Jury's investigation into sexual abuse over a 70-year period, by more than 300 priests in six dioceses across the state, 2018.



Physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse of children and vulnerable adults in the ‘care’ of the Church

The crimes committed by ‘carers’ include sexual and criminal violence, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, physical abuse and even torture. Children and young people were ‘rescued’ from troubled or poor families only to experience worse abuse, neglect and sexual abuse.

Some children, as young as 5 or 6, living in care homes in the UK, whose parents were still alive were ‘selected’ by many Christian religions, including the Catholic Church, to be sent as migrants to the new colonies of Australia, South Africa, New Zealand. Parents were not informed. Many children suffered traumatically in their new ‘homes’. The systemic failure was based on an entirely wrong assumption that the children’s faith was being safeguarded.

Read James’ story

First Nation children who were victims of Church and state forced acculturation policies

The state and Church, in collusion, implemented a policy of forced assimilation in many areas of the world. It has been described as ‘cultural genocide’.

An example is Canada’s treatment of First Nation Métis and Inuit families who were forced to send their children to schools far from home, where there were reports of neglect, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

In 2021, the mass graves of 215 children were found at Kamloops Indian Residential School, although only 51 deaths had been documented. In 1997 the Australian Catholic Church apologised for its part in an assimilation policy aimed at breaking the spiritual and cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Island people by removing tens of thousands of black children from their parents.

Read John Jones’ account of his experiences

Young pregnant women whose babies were forcibly removed

This policy was practiced in many countries with largely Catholic populations. Ireland is one of the best-known countries to institutionalise this abuse via a joint state and Church policy. 9,000 children died in 18 homes that were later investigated: slightly over one in every seven children. The policy was based on the mistaken belief that single mothers could not raise their children. Instead of the state and Church helping them to raise their children they were forcibly removed. This policy was implemented in the 1950s, 60s, 70s.

Pregnant, unmarried Catholic girls and women were accused of committing the ‘ultimate sin’ and were punished for it in Church run ‘mother and baby homes’. Huge grief and pain were inflicted on women who were offered no alternative to adoption. Decisions were taken without their informed consent.

The babies separated from their mothers after birth and sold into adoption who were also victims

They were denied their right to be brought up by their birth parent(s). A summary of the final report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation, Ireland, can be found in the Survivor Stories Resource. The full report is [here >>>](#)

Spain too has a hidden history of babies being taken from unmarried mothers for adoption abroad for a fee.

Read Marina G's story

The 2013 film *Philomena* with Judi Dench and Steve Coogan is the story of one woman's search for her child.

Women and girls used as forced labour in laundries and similar 'enterprises'

The abuses committed in these establishments, known as Magdalene Laundries, are best known in Ireland, with six in Dublin alone; the last one closed in 1996. However, they were also found in the USA, Europe, Canada and Great Britain. The oppression came to light in 1999 with the discovery of 115 graves in 1999 at The Good Shepherd Asylum. Magdalene Laundries, named after St Mary Magdalene, Apostle to the Apostles (but a reformed prostitute, according to Catholic tradition) were in effect, prisons or akin to concentration camps where all women were labelled as sinners, and some served life sentences.

Over 10,000 girls, some as young as 12 were sent to the laundries. Women were referred to by numbers not names, they worked in silence, were not allowed to speak with each other, received no wages and were unable to leave for any reason including seeing their families or their children. Profits went to the religious order.

There are many accounts written by former inmates e.g., ***Childhood Interrupted: Growing Up Under the Cruel Regime of the Sisters of Mercy*** by Kathleen O'Malley, 2005.

See also <http://jfmresearch.com>

Read the stories of three of these young women witnesses A, B and C about their experiences in the 1980s included in the report of the Irish Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation.

Women religious as victims of abusive employment practices

In late 2021 information emerged about nuns working at the Vatican without contracts of employment, salaries and agreed working hours. In contrast, their 'employers', senior prelates and cardinals receive a salary of up to 5,000 euros monthly plus subsidised accommodation. In February 2022, Pope Francis urged nuns employed in conditions resembling modern slavery, without employment contracts or a salary to 'fight back'.

Read Lucetta Scaraffia's account

Article: ['#NunsToo: How the Catholic Church has worked to silence women challenging abuse'](#)



Spiritual abuse

Spiritual abuse is explained by Doris Reisinger, a German former nun, philosopher, theologian and author as:

‘a violation of a person’s spiritual freedom, the violation of the most secret core and sanctuary where a person is alone with God, whose voice echoes in (her) depths.’ (La Croix 8 May 2021)

Spiritual abuse accompanies physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Only now is the full extent of this harm being recognised. Survivors describe feeling as if they were being abused by God, especially as a significant proportion of these abuses are perpetrated in a Church setting. Many survivors are retraumatised by seeing rosary beads, passing a Church or seeing a priest on the street.

Archbishop Jose Rodriguez Carballo in National Catholic Reporter 6 August 2021 gave this insight into spiritual abuse as seen by Pope Francis:

“ Pope Francis defines it as spiritual harassment, manipulation of consciences, brainwashing. This type of abuse usually occurs in the sphere of spiritual direction or within a community, especially when the internal forum (the individual’s conscience and spiritual state) is not distinguished from the external one.’

Read two stories by Joyce Meyer and Anonymous.

Read also the extract from A Church of England Conference on Spiritual Abuse, reported in the Guardian 17 October 2020.

The children of priests and the mothers of priests’ children

When priests father children, the children are most often treated as shameful secrets, being warned not to speak about or with their fathers. They are deprived of two loving parents. The conditions in which they are forced to live, if their father remains in the priesthood are harmful to the children, who are ‘hidden’ and ‘buried’. This is an emotionally abusive situation and they experience stigma and shame. Vincent Doyle, the founder of Coping International says that he and others ‘are sadly viewed as a means to an end of desired secrecy, deception and historical denial. They are threatened, assaulted and manipulated.’ Their mothers are forced to live a lie, feel ashamed and frightened lest the truth comes out about their child(ren)’s father.

Canon Law does not require a priest to leave the priesthood having fathered a child, since it is not a canonical crime, if the relationship that produced a child is consensual. However, Vatican guidelines, which state that they are based on ‘the welfare of the child is paramount’ ask the priest to leave the priesthood. This results in priests who are fathers keeping the fact secret from their bishops.

Read Victor’s story and Sarah’s story

See also the website Coping International: <http://www.copinginternational.com/>

ACTIVITY THREE

The need for large-scale cultural change and how it can really take root

Cover-up Culture - Francis Sullivan

Duration: 1:09:11

[Click here >>>](#)



Francis grew up in Perth, Australia and has had a varied career in teaching, health management and as Chief Executive for Catholic Health Australia. Between 2012 and 2018 Francis was CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth, Justice and Healing Council, set up to oversee the Church's engagement and involvement with the Australian Royal Commission's inquiry into institutional responses to child sexual abuse. Francis currently chairs the Mater Group of Hospitals as well as Catholic Social Services in Australia. In 2020, he was honoured as an Officer of the Order of Australia.

Some of the issues that you'll hear about in Francis's talk

- The features of a cover-up culture in the institutional Church, sexual assault and rape
- The challenges in changing a culture of systemic abuse
- The need for a system of accountability and structural Church reforms that are closer to the person and mission of Jesus Christ
- Identifying reform strategies to create strong foundations

Listen to the recording of this talk

Reflection and discussion –

These are some of the comments and issues that Francis raised that you might wish to discuss:

'Church officials place the interest of the institution, its assets, and reputation before the welfare of children and the obligation to the law'.

'Records were kept for at least 70 years, but it's only been in recent times that the extent and scope and nature of abuse and cover up has been made public through the insistence of public authorities and not the honesty of the institution'.

'It is a collective shadow that we all cast, bishop religious leaders and Church administrators exercise power ruthlessly, victims are oppressed, and truth suppressed'.

‘Coming to terms with the culture is the Rubicon that must be crossed if we want to learn the lessons of the abuse scandal’.

‘The Church must not be allowed to investigate itself’.

‘There were and still are individuals with their own moral compass, ... records show that clergy and religious did speak out on occasions ... but the reality is that the weight of the culture to comply to turn a blind eye, to rationalise, even excuse was so suffocating that the corruption continued unabated’.

‘See how intractable the Church hierarchy are to amending the protocols of the sacrament of confession. Info can’t be shared without breaking the seal of confession. If Church leaders genuinely wanted to respect the dignity and worth of the child, they would find a way through the dilemma’.

‘Strategy alone will not suffice. Culture is too powerful and fights back’ ...’the Church is in a state of trauma’.

Some questions to consider

1. How have victims been treated by the institution and the hierarchy?
2. Reflect on the features of a cover-up culture mentioned by Francis. Looking back to Activity One Part I, how did A711 and Brian explain the reaction of church authorities to their disclosures?
3. How does Francis explain the features of a corrupt cover-up Church culture that concealed child abuse?
4. ‘Only a collective effort of laity and clergy signed up to a process of reform will have any chance of ameliorating the defects of the culture.’ You might discuss the actions that Francis suggests are needed.
5. Why might the Church hierarchy resist when lay people act to drive change?



ACTIVITY FOUR

Moving forward and understanding that we, the People of God, are the change

What can we do? All our speakers take part in a panel discussion and questions. Catherine Deveney facilitates the discussion.

Duration: 1:07:53

[Click here >>>](#)



'I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me'

Matthew 25:40

The panel in this recording talk about their current relationship to the Church
Each panel member presents issues that they think urgently needs to change:

Anne: The current influences on the hierarchy's response to survivors; prioritising the Church's reputation, preserving its assets along with the impact of legal advice and the influence of insurers in the UK.

Tom: Hierarchy and obedience – a perspective from the United States.

Brian: Abuse of power and the selection of bishops - in the world-wide Church.

Francis: Clericalism- in the world-wide Church.

The session identifies positive, lay-led and forward-looking opportunities to radically reform the institutional Church's approach to criminal sexual violence and many types of abuse.

Listen to the recording of this talk

Reflection and discussion –

You'll hear reference to a number of questions or issues that challenge the status quo. It might be helpful to reflect on some of these:

Victims and survivors

'[meet with] a wall of abusive silence'

'in the secular world, we wouldn't get away with behaving like the Church does'

'parents have been afraid to challenge the institution even when their own children are being abused'

'Victims are dispensable' 'perpetrators are dispensable'

'Understand that abuse is not just historical [in the past]'

'Believe victims'

‘Don’t make assumptions’
‘Don’t expect victims to want to be with the Church’

Canon Law

‘Is Canon Law evil or is it applied evilly?’
‘It’s what the Bishops want it to be’
‘Canon Law is used for self-serving autocracy’

Conditions for change; the role of ‘the laity’

‘The Church must not be able to investigate itself. It’s this conflict of interest that drove the secrecy’
‘The laity have been co-opted by clericalism’
‘We all bear responsibility for the Church and the culture. As laity we are ‘too submissive, too forgiving and too compliant’
‘Part of the solution is naming what is dysfunctional’

You’ll also hear a discussion of how change must be achieved. You might want to identify the range of changes that panel members propose as urgent:

Our support and advocacy for survivors
Access to therapeutic help and alternative pastoral care for survivors
A change in the role of the laity and our relationship with the hierarchy which includes believing in ourselves
The ways in which bishops are appointed
Priest training and preparation
Structural and systemic change, and where that must come from
Ask yourselves what other changes you might support or welcome

The panel are asked to respond to the question ‘is the Church capable of change?’ You might note their answers and ask yourselves, in discussion, what do you think and why?

Read Veronica’s contribution to ‘A Welcoming Church’.

Veronica’s story, shared with Root & Branch:

“

‘You mention helping survivors to rebuild their faith. I think that in order to do that (speaking from my own experience) the first step would be to help with rebuilding our lives. What I am referring to is welcoming us back into the Church community instead of the repeated ostracisation and shunning which I have been subjected to over and over again. Experiencing love and care instead of denial and blaming is what I believe is needed to start rebuilding trust and with it, faith in others.

If the faith community throws you out and blames you, in doing so they are sending you a message that this is their way of witnessing to the God they believe in. It has certainly

“

left me feeling totally abandoned and unable to step inside a Church. Up until I made my disclosure, I had been a practising Catholic all my life and had been very active in my parish community.

I was in my early sixties when I stopped going to Mass - I left because I felt that if I continued going, with the treatment I was experiencing, I was silently saying that the Church community was right to treat me in this way and that I was accepting their treatment of me. I also couldn't cope with being in an environment where I was being ostracised.

My abuse began shortly after my Mum died leaving me very alone and vulnerable. An order of nuns became aware of my situation, and in an effort to help me, took me to a priest. Unbeknown to them he started sexually assaulting me. It went on for 9 years. 39 years later I finally disclosed it. I had remained close friends with the order through all the intervening years and trusted them hugely. They had been a huge and very positive influence on my faith and values in life.

When I told the nun, who had been instrumental in taking me to the priest, about my disclosure, she cut off contact with me. I told myself that she was a “one off”, 2 years later when my legal case was successfully concluded I went to the Provincial, quietly confident of her understanding. Nothing could have been further from the truth. She talked about “accusations against Terence”. I had brought a document from the police detailing the priest's abuse to many other young people as well as to myself. I asked her for some pastoral support. Her reply was “you don't expect us to help you.” By then I was in tears. I summoned up my courage and said, “what about the story of the Good Samaritan”. She answered saying “the Good Samaritan took the man lying at the side of the road to an expert”. Since then, no one in the order ever gets in touch with me.’

Discussion on Veronica's story:

1. Ask yourselves what we can do on hearing about this sort of reaction to disclosure?
2. How can we be more obviously welcoming as individuals to people who might be in a similar situation to Veronica?
3. Consider what contribution you will make to creating a genuinely welcoming and inclusive Church?



ACTIVITY FIVE

Exploring how abuse of power is described and defined

Drilling Down Deeper

The following extracts from published reports, books, and speeches can be used as points of reflection and discussion alongside the four talks in this resource. Alternatively, they can be used in a 'standalone' session to explore the issues that they raise. We've included a wide selection of material for you to select from. The extracts can also be used in conjunction with the accompanying document: 'Survivor Stories Resource' to give greater context and aid understanding.

Acknowledging the terrible harm inflicted on victims and survivors

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, Final Investigation Report on the Catholic Church (IICSA) England & Wales. November 2020

'Throughout the investigation, the evidence demonstrated failings in the Church's response and in particular, we were concerned by the role of those vested with leadership in relation to:

- the laboriously slow pace of change
- a lack of empathy and understanding towards many victims and survivors; and
- uncertainty as to whether a culture of safeguarding is fully embedded across the entire Church. Pace of change When the Church does act, the speed with which change is effected is laboriously slow.

When examining the ways in which many within the Church engage with victims and survivors (at all levels, including clergy and safeguarding staff), we heard evidence of some cases where the response did, and still does, lack compassion and empathy. This reflects directly upon the leadership given by some senior figures in the Church.

The experiences of some victims and survivors demonstrate ongoing failings by parts of the Church to respond promptly and properly to their inquiries, concerns and complaints. That evidence also suggests that on too many occasions the response to victims and survivors had insufficient focus on their needs.'

Statement on publication of the IICSA Report – Statement by the Bishops of England and Wales, 20 November 2020.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales welcomes the Report from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse relating to the institutional response of the Church in its duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

We thank the IICSA Panel for their work. The Report will now inform the ongoing reform and improvement of safeguarding in all aspects of the Church's life.

An important aspect of the Inquiry's work was the voice given to victims and survivors of abuse, including the accounts which they gave of their subsequent engagement with the Church. Listening attentively to their witness testimony has brought into sharp relief the extent of the damage this sexual abuse has had on their lives.

We apologise to all victims and survivors who have not been properly listened to, or properly supported by us. By listening with humility to those who have suffered, we can contribute to the healing of the wounds of abuse, as well as learn from those most directly affected how we must improve the Church's safeguarding standards, policies and procedures.

This is an ongoing task and one to which we are wholly committed. Child sexual abuse is a crime. It is a crime that requires committed vigilance and strict procedures to ensure reporting to the statutory authorities. This is the Church's policy. It is also why our safeguarding work needs to be continually reviewed and improved. Where there have been failings and inconsistency in the application of our safeguarding procedures, we acknowledge these and commit to actions which will bring about improvement.

Abuse is an evil act against the most vulnerable; it must never be excused or covered up. Abuse committed against children and the consequent damage to people's lives cannot be undone. For this, we apologise without reservation, and we are committed to listen attentively to the voices of those who have been abused.

This report is an important moment in our safeguarding journey in the Catholic Church in our countries. It will now be considered in detail by us, the bishops, at our Plenary Assembly beginning next week so we can explore how to integrate the findings of this important Inquiry into the life and work of the Church in order to consistently safeguard children and the vulnerable.

Vincent Cardinal Nichols
President

Jean-Marc Sauvé President of the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (France) October 2021

'Such an approach should begin by recognizing the violence committed, its scale - as uncovered by the Commission - the absolute illegitimacy of such acts, and the seriousness of the harm they have caused. Concrete recognition, through public ceremonies or memorials, as the CEF committed to in March 2021, is required. The Commission is insistent, however, on a humble recognition "at a human level" which must be utterly sincere: it is not simply a question of sins to be confessed but of crimes to be repaired, without any euphemisms, without any "we did not know", without any excuses drawn from the social or institutional context.'

Pope Francis, Homily at Mass with survivors, July 7, 2014

‘Before God and his people, I express my sorrow for the sins and grave crimes of clerical sexual abuse committed against you. And I humbly ask forgiveness. I beg your forgiveness, too, for the sins of omission on the part of Church leaders who did not respond adequately to reports of abuse made by family members, as well as by abuse victims themselves. This led to even greater suffering on the part of those who were abused, and it endangered other minors who were at risk.’

Creating radical change within the Church

Hans Zollner SJ, Academic Vice-Rector of the Jesuits’ Gregorian University in Rome, Chair of its Psychology Department and President of its Institute for Child Protection, in 2018

‘The fight against sexual abuse will endure for a long time, and we have to say goodbye to the illusion that the mere introduction of rules or guidelines is a complete solution. It involves a radical conversion, of adopting the attitude that the commitment to prevention and the decision to bring justice to the victims of abuse will not be set aside when the public attention to the crisis fades. From my point of view, this whole question will lead inevitably to purification, and to a more authentic, renewed way of being Church and living the Gospel, one way or another – either because we decide to on our own or because we will be obliged to.’

Thomas Doyle, 2014, at the 2014 annual convention of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests

‘The image of a Christian Church that enabled the sexual and spiritual violation of its most vulnerable members and, when confronted, responded with institutionalized mendacity and utter disregard for the victims cannot be adequately described as a "problem," a "crisis" or a "scandal." The widespread sexual violation of children and adults by clergy and the horrific response of the leadership, especially the bishops, is the present-day manifestation of a very dark and toxic dimension of the institutional Church.’

Thomas Doyle 2021

‘The hierarchy continue to believe that they can fix this problem from the inside. They caused the problem. The laity are the only part of the Church that would have a chance at doing anything meaningful and effective.’

We are part of the future

**The Tablet, 14 November 2021,
Open letter by 23 survivors of clerical abuse in England.**

‘Survivors of clerical abuse demand

‘There must be an end to the damage still being caused by a dysfunctional Church, with poor leadership and legal barricades, that keep victims and survivors at arms-length. The immense harm the Church continues to inflict shows a complete lack of Christian values, which the Church publicly claims to live by.

We thank the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) for its report on the Catholic Church. We welcome its findings, highlighting the Church’s gross failures to protect children and others from abuse. We are grateful that the inquiry has exposed the Church’s treatment of victims and survivors when it comes to reparation and care, showing how the Church perpetuates an adversarial culture in its dealings with us.

The report clearly shows the Church’s lack of willingness and ability to change of its own accord. There should be no crocodile tears from the Church hierarchy, calling this report a “wake-up call”. The Catholic Church has been here before, with the Nolan report in 2001 and the Cumberlege report in 2007, both followed by broken promises and shocking inertia. The Church has had victims and survivors hammering on its door for decades, pleading with it to listen to our cries for help, to stop the abuse and to put proper safeguarding measures in place, a theme repeated in evidence given to IICSA.

Colossal amounts of charitable-status Church wealth have been used to employ lawyers and insurance companies, to fight civil claims and to overpower victims and survivors, exploiting any legal loopholes they can to put us off pursuing cases or speaking out. Every effort has gone into protecting the reputation and resources of the Church, and providing care and support for our abusers, while neglecting us, the victims and survivors.

So many lives have been ruined and some tragically ended, not just because of horrendous sexual, physical, psychological and spiritual abuse, but by appalling coverups and a lack of action to protect us and others in the Church’s care. While we recognise some changes and improving attitudes in a few areas of the Church, they do not go far enough. We very much hope that IICSA will be as hard-hitting in its final report, when making more specific recommendations.

We believe there is clear evidence that there must be mandatory safeguarding reporting laws and an independent body responsible for the oversight of safeguarding. Without this, there is little hope of meaningful change, when the Church has repeatedly failed to regulate itself, with catastrophic consequences. There must be an end to the damage still being caused by a dysfunctional Church, with poor leadership and legal barriers that keep victims and survivors at arm’s length.

The immense harm the Church continues to inflict shows a complete lack of Christian values, which the Church claims to live by. Many of us were children when we were abused, and our abusers have died. But we have the rest of our lives to live, carrying the damage done to us. We are not here to be assigned to an inconvenient past that can be swept under the carpet. We are

part of the future. Nothing will cause us more despair than to hear more of the same, with a future inquiry a few years from now. This is not a time to read and reflect. ‘

This is an unconditional demand for change. Eamonn Flanagan; Graham Wilmer; Daniel Mackle; Caroline Meakin; Deirdre McCormack; Stephen Bernard; Chris Speight; Gerard McLaughlin; Mark Murray; Jim Kirby; Jeremy Harvey. The following signatories have preferred to use the cyphers allocated to them by the inquiry: RC-A117; RC-A711; RC-A2; RCA343; RC-A23; RC-A20; RC-A37; RCF1; RC-F6; RC-A8; RC-A5; RC-A77

Abuse of power

Pope Francis, in a speech delivered at the close of the final Mass for the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church, 2019

‘The phenomenon of the sexual abuse of minors cannot be understood without considering “power”, “since it is always the result of an abuse of power in other forms of abuse, such as child soldiers, child prostitutes, starving children, trafficking victims, child victims of war, refugee children, aborted children, and so many others.’

The Holy Father also thanked all priests and consecrated persons ‘who serve the Lord faithfully and totally, despite the shameful conduct of some of their confreres; as well as the majority of priests who are not only faithful to their celibacy but spend themselves in a ministry today made even more difficult by the scandals of the few (but always too many of their confreres’.) He thanked, too, the faithful, who ‘who are well aware of the goodness of their pastors, and who continue to pray for them and to support them’.



Clericalism

‘The ethical collapse of the Church’, James Carroll, author and former priest, in *The Atlantic*, June 2019, page 11

‘Clericalism, with its cult of secrecy, its theological misogyny, and its hierarchical power, is at the root of Roman Catholic dysfunction. The Church’s maleness and misogyny became inseparable from its structure. The conceptual underpinnings of clericalism can be laid out simply: Women were subservient to men. Laypeople were subservient to priests, who were defined as having been made “ontologically” superior by the sacrament of holy orders. Removed by celibacy from competing bonds of family and obligation, priests were slotted into a clerical hierarchy that replicated the medieval feudal order.’

James Carroll, *The Truth at the Heart of the Lie*, 2021, pages 9-10

‘The nub at the centre of the notorious RC sexual predation is an idolatry of the priest and of the priestly status that goes by the name of “clericalism”. It is a malignity marked by a cult of secrecy, a high-flown theological misogyny that demeans all women and fosters an unbridled male supremacy; a suppression of normal erotic desire; a hierarchical domination of priest over lay people; and a basing of that power on threats of a doom-laden afterlife, drawn from a misreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The inbuilt rank-obsession of the clerical system also thwarts the virtues of otherwise good priests, and perverts the message of selfless love that the Church was established to proclaim.’

Institutional cover-up of (sexual) abuse

Archbishop De Moulins-Beaufort’s second response to the French Sauvé report, (The Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (CIASE) 2021

‘Our Church is a place of serious crimes, of frightening attacks on the lives and integrity of children and adults. We must recognize and confess it: we have allowed an ecclesial system to develop which—far from bearing life and opening up to spiritual liberty - damages, crushes, tramples on human beings and their most basic rights.’

Chair of the Catholic panel at the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse, England 2016 (IICSA) Baroness Nuala O’Loam

‘We believe that concealing or denying failings for the sake of an organisation’s public image is dishonesty on the part of the organisation for reputational benefit. This constitutes a form of institutional corruption’.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, Final Investigation Report on the Catholic Church, (IICSA) England & Wales, November 2020



‘The response of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to allegations of child sexual abuse focussed too often on the protection of the clergy and the Church’s reputation. Some institutions and individuals in the Church failed to report allegations and concerns to police and statutory authorities as required. In some cases, members of the dioceses and religious institutes actively took steps to shelter and shield those accused of child sexual abuse.

This was done at the expense of protection of children. There were failures to consider the risks posed to children by perpetrators who were seen as colleagues, brethren and friends and not as sexual abusers of children. In some cases, suspects were moved from one institution to another – from parish to parish, abbey to abbey – with the receiving body not informed of the dangers posed by the individual being sent to them.’

‘[the] Holy See’s limited response on this matter manifestly did not demonstrate a commitment to taking action. Their lack of cooperation passes understanding’.

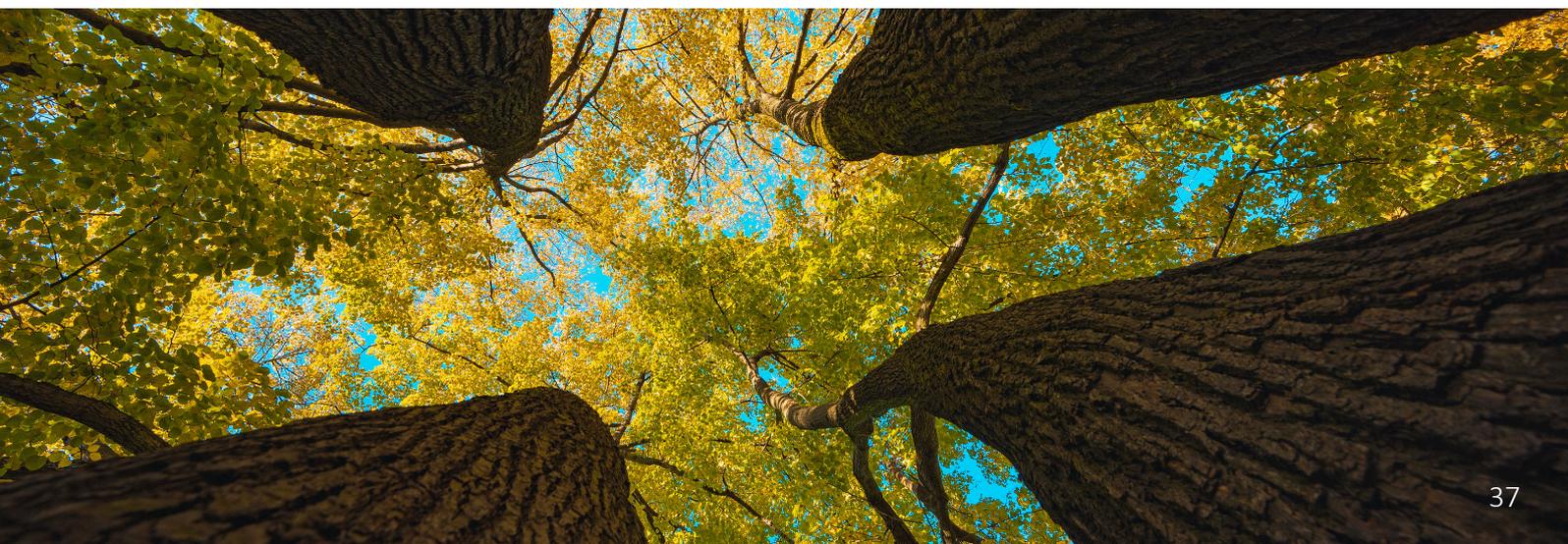
Charles L. Bailey Jr., [In the Shadow of the Cross, 2006](#)

‘How often do we hear from the local diocesan people—the bishop, the communications director, the victim assistance coordinator, and others—that this abuse is not restricted to clergy, but, rather, it is a societal problem? It does occur outside in the public realm. When was the last time you heard of a sex offender not being held accountable for his actions once caught?

The Church treated the abuse as a sin only and nothing more. Out in society, sex offenders are not moved to another community quietly.

But protest that priests are ‘no worse’ than other groups or than men in general is a dire indictment of the profession. It is surprising that this attitude is championed by the Church authorities. Although the extent of the problem will continue to be debated, sexual abuse by Catholic priests is a fact.

The reason why priests, publicly dedicated to celibate service, abuse is a question that cries out for explanation. Sexual activity of any adult with a minor is a criminal offense. By virtue of the requirement of celibacy, sexual activity with anyone is proscribed for priests. These factors have been constant and well-known by all Church authorities’.



Jean-Marc Sauvé President of the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (France), October 2021 (CIASE)

‘Over the greater part of the period studied by the CIASE, its observations show that the Church’s attitude could be summarized as one of concealment, relativization or even denial, with only a very recent recognition, dating from 2015, and even then, unequally accepted by dioceses and religious institutions.

If this analysis is combined with what has been said in the first section regarding the prevalence of sexual violence against children and vulnerable persons, the concept of a systemic phenomenon emerges. It is not that the violence was organized or accepted by the institution (although this did happen in a very small number of communities or institutions), rather that the Church did not have any clear idea how to prevent such violence or indeed even see it, let alone deal with it in a fair and determined manner.’

Jean-Marc Sauvé President of the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (France), October 2021 (CIASE)

‘Faced with so many historical or recent traumas, the Commission believes that there can be no question of “turning the page”. The future cannot be built on denial or on burying the harsh reality; recognition and responsibility are required to advance. It is vital to really deliver justice to the men and women who have suffered, in body and soul, from sexual violence in the Catholic Church. Consequently, everything must be done to repair, in so far as is possible, the harm which has been done to them and to help them rebuild their lives. And to eradicate the breeding ground of abuse and the impunity of the perpetrators of these crimes.

Such a step forward cannot bypass the need for a humble acknowledgement of responsibility from the Church authorities for the mistakes and crimes committed under its auspices. This will involve taking a path of contrition – on a level with the scale of suffering – which cannot be conceived and covered in a matter of days or weeks. After all that has happened, there can be no common future without work towards truth, forgiveness, and reconciliation and this applies to the Church as much as to civil institutions.

The Commission has tried to contribute to this search for the truth. It is now up to the Church to seize on it, follow it up in and regain the trust of Christians and the respect of the French people in whose society it has a full role to play. It is imperative to re-establish an alliance, which has been severely tested. This is my colleagues’ and my deepest hope.

The Commission proposes a level of responsibility which would encompass firstly the legal level – in a criminal sense – but also civil and social levels. It must apply individually and to the particular role exercised by the individual, as well as to all legal entities comprising the Church. It must apply to individuals who have committed acts of abuse as well as to those who have not but whom, through the legal relationship existing between the perpetrator and the bishop of the perpetrator’s diocese, are linked.

CIASE nonetheless pleads for a wide-ranging overhaul of Canon Law in criminal matters, and in dealing with and sanctioning offences. This should begin with a clear definition of the offences in the Code of Canon Law and their implementing legislation, specifying applicable reference standards by establishing a scale of the gravity of offences and by distributing a collection of case law in the matter. Secondly, canonical criminal procedure needs to be reworked and aligned with basic fair trial rules, thereby giving victims a place in canonical procedure – which is not the case today. These reforms would allow the inter-diocesan canonical criminal court, whose creation was announced by the CEF in the spring of 2021, to operate efficiently.

The Commission recommends really getting to the bottom of things. It suggests that a distinction be made between spiritual accompaniment and professional guidance for seminarians and novices; that the incentive contained in the Church's reference texts (the Ratio issued by the Holy See and implemented at national level) to carry out a psychological assessment of candidates for the priesthood or religious life be taken to heart, and that psychological follow-up be provided if desired.

The content of the training itself should include more human sciences, be taught by specialists with more diverse profiles than is currently the case, and place greater emphasis on the development and affectivity of children and young people; law (Canon Law and state law - including the rights of the child); and the importance of critical thinking, particularly about issues of authority and obedience.

The Commission also recommends a more formalized recruitment procedure of seminaries and novitiates which would be helped by an improved communication of negative responses given to unsuccessful candidates between dioceses, seminaries and congregations. Continuing education should include modules about sex abuse, including specifically for trainers and supervisors in seminaries and novitiates, as well as for fidei donum priests in their induction session. It should also be nourished by peer-to-peer exchanges and the experiential knowledge of victims, and indeed of the faithful in general. Finally, in terms of prevention, the Commission encourages a very broad approach.'



APPENDIX 1

SOME PRAYERS

BLESSINGS &

A HEALING SERVICE

Gathering prayers

Prayer One

Loving God, we thank you for bringing us together today and in the weeks to come as we begin our Stolen Lives series of talks. We are united across your world in our commitment to create a church that is safe, just, inclusive and loving. We know that there is far to go and much to do and we ask Your Spirit to inspire, guide and protect us on our journey.

We are deeply thankful that survivors of abuse are so generously guiding us on our journey. We pray that we will follow their brave, determined and selfless example.

We ask Your Spirit to open our minds and hearts as we react to their experiences. Guide us in discerning how we, in solidarity with survivors, move forward following Your Way of truth and justice.

Prayer Two

Holy Spirit, thank you for bringing us together today. Be with us as we discern how to put survivors of clerical abuse at the heart of what we do. Help us to listen to Your voice as we decide what actions we will take.

Dear Spirit, give us the courage and authority as the People of God, to let nothing and nobody distract us from our mission to challenge the many abuses of power in your church, wherever and whenever we identify them.

Give us also the determination and strength to expose corruption and cover-up as we work to create a church with open doors, where no one need be afraid to speak their truths, and where wisdom, joy and concern for others guide what we do and how we do it.

Prayer Three

We gather together tonight as
the Broken and Wounded Body of Christ.

We gather in recognition
that when one of the body
has their life stolen
the whole body suffers
and cannot grow to fullness.

We gather seeking to be in solidarity with survivors
knowing that for too long
we have not truly listened to their story
and felt their pain
and for that we ask their forgiveness.

We gather tonight
in the presence of a God who weeps
for those who have been abused,

maltreated, violated
and who rages at the response of those
in positions of authority
in the Body of Christ.

We gather seeking to be empowered by the Spirit
such that we may go forward in solidarity
with all those who have been abused
seeking truth and justice, and reconciliation.
Amen.

Thanksgiving prayers

Prayer One

We give prayerful thanks for the courage and generosity that survivors show us and their courage in speaking out, helping us on our journey towards a safe, just and inclusive church.

Prayer Two

Loving God, we thank you for bringing us together again, united as we are across our world - to create a church which is safe, just, inclusive, transparent and loving.

We thank survivors for all their work and their courage to speak out to uncover the deep hypocrisy which damages our church. Through exposing these fault lines, may we work to heal the church from its fear of the truth.

Through the ministry of those who speak out and seek to heal -
Spirit of God, make us whole.

Through the bearing of one another's burdens -
Spirit of God make us whole.

In the transfiguring of evil and pain-
Spirit of God make us whole.

In the ministry of counselling and therapy
Spirit of God make us whole.

Through the ministry of healing and prayer
Spirit of God make us whole.

We pray for the inspiration of the Spirit to know how we can heal our broken church through understanding, wisdom and prayer.
Amen.

A Litany of Sorrow

We, the People of God, recognise that the abuse of children, young people and adults is a crime. The structures of the Church have greatly contributed to the damage caused.

We bring to mind all those people who have been grievously hurt and harmed by priests and religious.

We are truly sorry for the hurt afflicted on them.

In solidarity, we remember:

Mothers compelled to work without pay and who were forcibly separated from their babies.
We are truly sorry for the hurt inflicted on you

Children, physically, emotionally and sexually abused in children's homes and residential settings.
We are truly sorry for the hurt inflicted on you

Child victims of crimes of sexual violence by cardinals, bishops, priests and religious.
We are truly sorry for the hurt inflicted on you

Children groomed and abused in the production of abusive online images
We are truly sorry for the hurt inflicted on you

Birth children of priests, bishops or cardinals denied their right to family life and compelled to live as guilty secrets.
We are truly sorry for the hurt inflicted on you

Lay and religious women subjected to sexual violence (sexually assaulted and raped) emotional and spiritual abuse by male priests and religious.
We are truly sorry for the hurt inflicted on you

Seminarians, priests and religious who suffered spiritual, physical, emotional or sexual abuse from those in positions of trust, power and authority.
We are truly sorry for the hurt inflicted on you

We acknowledge the harm experienced by God's people; the clergy and religious who are just and compassionate and everyone whose faith and ability to trust is shattered by the realisation of the extent of abuse within the Kingdom of God.

Holy Spirit, who lives within each one of us, help us to move forward empowered by compassion determination and knowledge, in solidarity, to bring about truth, justice, and reconciliation.

Prayer of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

Since your mercy has been revealed
In the tenderness of your Son Jesus Christ,
who said to his disciples:
"Suffer the little children to come unto me",
we pray that your Church may be a secure home
where all children and vulnerable adults are brought closer to your Beloved Son.

May all those who have been abused
physically, emotionally and sexually by your ministers,
be respected and accompanied by
tangible gestures of justice and reparation so that
they may feel healed with the balm of your compassion.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Prayer for a reformed Church, Written by 5 Theses

We share a prayer for a reformed church from our friends in the United States. 5 Theses are a group of women from Washington DC, who are united in concern for the future of our church, and the belief that it cannot remain life-giving for so many Catholics without structural change.

They tell us that they wrote their 5 Theses out of love, to help our Church and work with our bishops, with the expectation of being heard. Their fifth thesis is that this prayer will be said in every church in every diocese every Sunday.

Prayer for a reformed church

We pray that from this community of gathered people will rise a new church:

a church that protects the abused and the marginalized, ministering to all in search of healing.

a church that strives continually to overcome every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on gender, race, colour, social condition, sexual orientation, language or religion, in order to pave the way for a new future of joy and hope

We pray to the Lord that the Holy Spirit will give us understanding, wisdom and strength.

Prayer written by the St Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Shrub Oak, NY 10588, USA, contributed by Gerald Arbuckle SM

Our Mother of Sorrow's
you wept as your Son's Body
was wounded and scarred.
Together with you
we grieve alongside children and adults
who are victims of sexual abuse.
We lament the trust that has been betrayed
and the wounds of body, mind, and soul
that they suffer.

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
we bring our sorrow, anger,
confusion, and disbelief
to the altar of your Son, Jesus.
Pray for us as we seek
the Holy Spirit's transforming love
and guidance to purify the Church
and to heal all who suffer with these wounds.
Amen.

A Blessing

The Spirit's Surprises – a blessing for us all

Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice
In Finding Hope Again by Peter Millar, 2003

May the Spirit
bless us with discomfort
at easy answers, half-truths and
superficial relationships so that
we will have love deep in our heart.

May the Spirit
bless us with anger
at injustice and oppression
and exploitation of people and the earth
so that we will work for
justice, equity and peace.

May the Spirit
bless us with tears to shed
for those who suffer
so that you will
reach out your hand
to comfort them.

May the Spirit
bless us with the foolishness
to think we can make a difference
in the world,
so that you will do the things
which others say cannot be done.

A Service for people who have been abused

With grateful thanks and permission from the group of people who wrote this service, which was held at the church of St Mary Star of the Sea, Leith, Scotland

This service may be held as a whole, or you might wish to use prayers or readings from the service on their own.

Welcome

Gathering Hymn

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ light for you
in the night time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

Lighting of the Candles

The Candle of Sadness

- L:** As we light this candle we remember with deep sadness the women and men whose lives have been lost or destroyed by the acts of sexual abuse committed against them when they were children.
God of loving kindness, have mercy on us.
- All:** **God of loving kindness, have mercy on us.**

The Candle of Sorrow

- L:** As we light this candle we remember with sorrow the times when some of the leaders of our Church community refused to listen to cries for help and turned against vulnerable children and their families.
God of loving kindness, have mercy on us
- All:** **God of loving kindness, have mercy on us.**

Candle of Hope

- L:** As we light this candle we pray for the light of hope.
We commit ourselves to always stand in the light and to never again allow the darkness of sin to stop us from becoming the presence of respectful love and kindness
God of loving kindness, have mercy on us
- All:** **God of loving kindness, have mercy on us.**

First Reading

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

- R:** The word of the Lord
All: **Thanks be to God.**

The Broken Body

Testimony of a Survivor followed by Silent Reflection

[one of the survivors' stories could be used here if wished]

Testimony

Silent Reflection

The following music can be played - [Click here >>>](#)

**When one is broken the body suffers
let's pray for healing for one another.
When one is broken the body suffers
let's pray for healing for one another.**

Let's pray for all those who suffer today
Let's pray for those who have lost their faith
Let's pray for those who won't face their guilt
Let's pray for those who are vulnerable still

**When one is broken the body suffers
let's pray for healing for one another.
When one is broken the body suffers
let's pray for healing for one another.**

Let's work for those who have lost their youth
Let's work with those who won't face the truth
Let's work
Let's work for those who are still to come

Your children, my children
all children are our children

Gospel

Matthew 28:1-10

R: The Gospel of the Lord
All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Litany of Mercy, Deliverance and Prayer

In the pain of broken trust and shattered lives,
have mercy on us.
In these days of anger and unanswered questions,
have mercy on us.
In our compassion for all who are suffering,
have mercy on us.
In our grief for all that has been lost,
have mercy on us.
In our despair at the ways abuse has harmed our mission,
have mercy on us.

From the abuse of power
and exploitation in relationships,
Good Lord, deliver us.
From being too slow to recognise sin
and the damage it does,
Good Lord, deliver us.
From the habits of manipulation
and coercion that distort our common life,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From the paralysis of denial and fear,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From being too quick to attribute blame
or demand forgiveness,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From believing ourselves safe
through anything other than your grace,
Good Lord, deliver us.

For survivors of sexual misconduct and abuse
seeking courage and healing,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have acted with integrity
in giving a voice to the abused
Lord, hear our prayer.

For church and community members
offering compassion and support,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have harmed others
by their actions or their inaction,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who live with painful memories,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who are searching for healing and hope,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For courage to resist demonising and dehumanising others,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For wisdom in working for a future of justice and integrity,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For honesty and accountability in all our relationships,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For a lasting change of culture in the Church
for the better protection of children
and other vulnerable people,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For grace to change and be changed as you forgive us,
Lord, hear our prayer.

Lighting of Candles of Commitment

[A candle may be lit for each of the following, or you may prefer to group 2 or 3 together]

Profession of Hope

I believe in God the creator of us all,
who has given the earth to all people.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
who gave himself to the world to encourage us and to heal us,
and to deliver us from the oppressors,
to proclaim the peace of God to humankind.

I believe in the Spirit of God,
who works in every woman and man of goodwill.

I believe in the Church,
given as a beacon for all nations,
moved by the Spirit to serve all people.

I believe that God will finally destroy the power of sin in us all
and that humanity will share his everlasting life.

I do not believe in the right of the strongest,
nor in the force of arms,
nor in the power of oppressors.

I want to believe in human rights,
in the solidarity of all people,
in the power of non-violence.

I do not believe in racism, sexism, wealth, privilege,
or the established order.

I want to believe that all women and men are equally human;
that order based on violence and injustice is not order.

I do not believe we can ignore things which happen far away.

I want to believe that the whole world is my home
and that the field I plough and the harvest I reap
belong to everyone.

I do not believe that I can fight oppression far away
if I tolerate injustice here.

I want to believe that there is but one right everywhere
and that I am not free if one person remains enslaved.

I do not believe that war and hunger are inevitable
and peace unattainable.

I want to believe in the beauty of simplicity,
in love with open hands,
in peace on earth.

I do not believe that all suffering is in vain,
nor that our dreams will remain dreams,
nor that death is the end.

I dare to believe,
always in spite of everything,
in a new humanity;
in God's own dream of a new heaven and a new earth
where justice will flourish.

Our Father

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen

Sign of Peace and Solidarity

Closing Prayer

Creator God,
we thank you for gathering us together
in prayer and solidarity for, and with, those who have been abused.
May your Spirit of love help us to comfort and support each other
and empower us to go forward seeking truth and justice;
healing and reconciliation.
We ask this in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

Final Hymn

We are one in the Spirit,
we are one in the Lord,
we are one in the Spirit,
we are one in the Lord,
and we pray that all unity
may one day be restored.

**And they'll know we are Christians by our love,
by our Love,
yes, they'll know, we are Christians by our love.**

We will walk with each other,
we will walk hand in hand.
We will walk with each other,
we will walk hand in hand.
And together we'll spread the news
that God is in our land.

We will work with each other,
We will work side by side.
We will work with each other,
we will work side by side.
And we'll guard each one's dignity
and save each one's pride.

All praise to the Father
from whom all things come,
and all praise to Christ Jesus, his only Son,
and all praise to the Spirit
Who makes us one.

APPENDIX 2

AN INTRODUCTION TO ROOT & BRANCH AND THE SCOTTISH LAITY NETWORK

Root & Branch

<https://www.rootandbranchsynod.org/>



Root & Branch is a movement or forum not an organisation. We are working for a safe, just and inclusive church. We treasure our independence and believe that as the People of God, we take responsibility for healing of our institution and our world. We strive to be a place of welcome for ALL in the way we relate to each other and to other and to be respectful and compassionate in how we relate to each other and the institutional church.

Prayer is also at the heart of what we do; we ask for the guiding inspiration of the Holy Spirit. A core team of volunteers give their time to organise and develop our work. People have joined us from across the world, most specifically the English-speaking countries: England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Eire, India, the Philippines, Canada, the United States. We are followed in parts of Africa, Latin America and Europe.

Root & Branch began in January 2020, by three brave women who responded to journalist Joanna Moorhead's call for a 'a synod that starts with women'. Our on-line Journey of Discernment began in October 2020, with an array of inspirational speakers from all over the world. Recordings of all their talks are available on our website.

Our inclusive lay-led Synod

Our inclusive lay-led synod was held 5-12 September 2021 and we were privileged to hear talks by an international group of theologians and activists, with Mary McAleese as our keynote speaker. No topic was deemed to be "outside the remit" of our Synod. All the talks are freely available on our website and a list of these is available as Appendix one, should you wish to include any of these as part of your learning.

The Bristol Text

This is our manifesto for change and was prepared to give 'ordinary Catholics like ourselves' the reassurance that changes can be made that are in keeping with the best of Catholic tradition. It offers practical and challenging visions for the Church. It is available [here >>>](#)

French, Italian, Spanish and Mandarin translations are available on our website.

Scottish Laity Network

E: slaitynetwork@gmail.com



Our core vision in the Scottish Laity Network is to enable Scottish laity to come together as disciples of Jesus, and through prayer, dialogue and discernment find 'new ways' of being Church in Scotland in the 21st Century. Rooted in that vision we seek to reflect on the 'signs of the times' as revealed through COVID-19 and the Climate Emergency and, through the promptings of the Spirit, discern how we are called to respond.

To read Scottish Laity Network's Overview August 2017 - February 2022 [click here >>>](#)