

Resources for Survivors of Clergy Sexual Misconduct:

Outgrowing the Pain Together: Book for spouses and partners of adults abused as children. Author: Eliana Gil. (1992)

The Sexual Healing Journey: A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse.
Author Wendy Maltz (2012).

Trauma Proofing Your Kids-A Parents' Guide to Instilling Confidence, Joy, and Resilience. Authors: Peter Levine and Maggie Kline. (2008)

Healing Voices: A magazine created by survivors abused by clergy. It includes articles from victims-survivors, clergy, academics and more. It was created by survivors who wish to find healing through the church and not against it.
www.thehealingvoicesnewsletter.wordpress.com

Male Survivor: Resources and support available to male survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones. www.malesurvivor.org

One in Six : A site for male survivors. 1in6.org

Peace Circle: Support group for survivors and loved ones at the Healing Garden, Holy Family Catholic Church. Meets one Sunday/month. Contact Vince Sperduto, (e)vince@milliniumhope.com

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network): The nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. www.rainn.org
National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-4673

SNAP: Survivors Network by those Abused by Priests, www.snapnetwork.org

USCCB Victim Assistance

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. www.usccb.org

Tom Tharayil, Chicago Archdiocese Victim Assistance Coordinator
312-534-8267 ttharayil@archchicago.org

To ensure the best resources and investigation practices are engaged, we encourage all allegations concerning the abuse and/or neglect of minors be reported to the DCFS Hotline (1-800-25-ABUSE) and the local police department first before reaching out to the Chicago Archdiocese Office of the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY). If you need to report historical abuse, please contact OPCY at 312.534.5254, protect.archchicago.org

Voice of the Faithful - Members seek full transparency and accountability in Church governance and full incorporation of lay Catholics in the life and work of the Church at every level. www.votf.org

Catholic Charities Inspiring Hope Program – Do you know a child who has experienced physical or sexual abuse or neglect by anyone, not just clergy? Are you an adult who as a child experienced physical or sexual abuse or neglect by anyone, not just clergy? As a result, are you struggling to find ways to cope? We can help! the ICJIA Inspiring Hope Program through Catholic Charities offers **FREE** counseling services and case management services to children and adults. The Inspiring Hope Program is centrally located at the Tolton Peace Center (5645 W. Lake St., Chicago, IL 60644) with availability to meet throughout Chicago and Cook County. For more information, call 773-922-7219.

Resources of the Archdiocese of Chicago related to Clergy Sexual Misconduct

The Office for the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY) Archdiocese of Chicago's Response to Sexual Abuse of Minors

Early and Decisive:

1991 Cardinal Joseph Bernardin convened a lay commission to review the Archdiocese of Chicago's procedures for handling accusations of sexual abuse.

1992 The Archdiocese of Chicago put in place policies and procedures to address allegations and issues related to sexual abuse of minors. The Archdiocese of Chicago created the first Office of Victim Assistance Ministry to provide direct outreach and support to victims-survivors and their families. The Archdiocese of Chicago created an independent office (now known as the Office of Child Abuse Investigations and Review) to receive allegations of abuse of minors by clergy.

1993 The Archdiocese of Chicago's Independent Review Board convened to review allegations of abuse and to make direct recommendations of the accused clergy's fitness for ministry to Cardinal.

Comprehensive and Sustained:

The Archdiocese of Chicago created the **Office for the Protection of Children and Youth** (OPCY) in 2003 to bring together the various ministries within the archdiocese that had been operating to ensure the archdiocese is a safe place for children. The following offices work together to stay current on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. You can contact the Office of the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY) at 312.534.5254

Office for Assistance Ministry (OAM) personnel reach out and extend supportive services to victims-survivors from the moment they come forward with an allegation of clergy sexual abuse. This includes traveling throughout the country with personnel from the Office of Child Abuse Investigation and Review (CAIR) to meet with and listen to victims-survivors. OAM personnel also provide the opportunity for victims-survivors to get independent professional counseling from fully accredited therapists. Additionally, OAM personnel have worked in collaboration with victims-survivors to respond to their need for healing. This has led to the development of the Healing Garden, annual Mass for Hope and Healing and Pinwheel Service for Child Abuse Prevention, victim-survivor led peace circles, and the Healing Voices magazine. To date over 400 victims-survivors and family members have been served by OAM personnel. Contact Thomas Tharayil at 312-534-8267 or ttharayil@archchicago.org.

Office of Child Abuse Investigation and Review (CAIR) is headed by a lay professional who provides a compassionate and thorough process for receiving and investigating reports of child abuse against archdiocesan personnel. Archdiocese personnel notify public authorities of all reports of possible abuse of any kind and from

any date, regardless of legal requirements. Contact Leah McCluskey at 312-534-5205 or lmcccluskey@archchicago.org.

- The Director of CAIR serves as staff for the Independent Review Board, which is an advisory board for the Cardinal. The Board's main charges are ensuring the safety of children and determining a cleric's fitness for ministry. Over 230 recorded Board meetings have been held. The Board has determined 296 allegations of abuse to be substantiated and determined 75 allegations of abuse to not be substantiated.

Safe Environment Office personnel provide resources to educate archdiocesan clergy, ~~employees and volunteers~~ on how to ~~prevent child~~ sexual abuse, how to recognize sex offender behavior and how to create safe environments for children and youth. Since 2003 more than 3,700 training sessions in the archdiocese have been held training more than 263,000 adults.

- Archdiocesan parishes and ~~schools~~ are required to provide valuable training to children and youth on how to recognize, respond and report grooming or abuse.
- Safe Environment Office personnel also screen, through name-based background checks, all clergy, employees and volunteers. Office personnel also receive and review fingerprint results for school personnel.
- All employees and volunteers who work with children and youth in the archdiocese must submit a CANTS (Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking Systems) Form.
- All employees and volunteers in the archdiocese must abide by the archdiocese's Code of Conduct.
- The archdiocese requires Mandated Reporter Training for all clergy, school personnel, religious education personnel, youth ministers and coaches as part of the archdiocese's Safe Environment Compliance.

Contact Mayra Flores at 312.534.5238 or mflores@archchicago.org

Priest Monitoring Program is the Archdiocese of Chicago's stringent monitoring program of clergy with substantiated cases of sexual abuse against them.- No priest with a substantiated case of sexual abuse of a minor is in public ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago. No withdrawn priest is permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or perform any sacraments. They are also not permitted to wear clerical garb. The Prayer and Penance Program was established for priests withdrawn from ministry due to at least one substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor. The program was initiated in 2008 by Francis Cardinal George to provide safety for the community, the program participants and the Church. Withdrawn priests are expected to do penance for their sins, pray for victims/survivors of sexual abuse and pray for the Church harmed by the actions of some priests.

What We Do

The primary purpose of the Prayer and Penance Program is to prevent sexual abuse by the program participants and to protect the community from harm.

The Prayer and Penance Program seeks the following:

- Reduce risk by promoting healthy living on the part of participants in the program.

- Prevent harm to the faith of Catholics within the Archdiocese.
- Protect the reputation of the priesthood from further harm by individuals in the program.

Consistent accountability within a supervised framework is the core of the program. The program participants are monitored daily by the Case Manager who utilizes various techniques to review their compliance with the program. The Case Manager also works closely with other offices to fulfill the objectives of the program.

Contact Moira Reilly, Case Manager - 312.534.5251 or mreilly@archchicago.org

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People:

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was approved in 2002 by the bishops of the United States Catholic Conference. The latest revision was approved June 2018. The Charter reinforced what the Archdiocese of Chicago was doing by requiring all dioceses to:

- Heal and promote reconciliation of victims survivors and their families;
- Make prompt and effective response to abuse allegations;
- Cooperate with civil authorities;
- Discipline offenders;
- Create a safe environment for children and young people through training and screening;
- Provide means of accountability for the future and to ensure the problem continues to be effectively dealt with through the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection and the National Review Board.

Every year the Archdiocese of Chicago participates in an audit of the implementation of the Charter's requirements. Every year the archdiocese passes the audit.

To report an allegation of abuse and/or neglect of minors, contact the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Hotline at 800.25.ABUSE and/or contact your local police department. You can also contact the Office of the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY) at 312.534.5254.

A priest's epiphany: People in the pews will save the Catholic Church by Rev. Bill Stenzel

I am a "cradle Catholic" from the South Side of Chicago. In local parlance, "I was baptized at Sabina, grew up in Leo, Leo HS, class of '62." Faith was simple because the Catholic Church had all the answers and always would: There is a God. Be good. Go to heaven!

During my first weeks of high school, the jovial and gentle John XXIII was elected pope. Pushing for renewal, he was a hospice nurse to outdated practices and worship, a midwife to much-needed reforms. We heard him call church leaders to a Vatican Council. From that council came a new vision, a church that was more than its hierarchy. We, the people in the pews, weren't just spectators, we were the church. In December 1964 we rearranged church furniture to bring the altar table close to us in the pews. We set aside the church's language, Latin, to pray in our language, English.

We were energized. But troubling surprises lay ahead.

For half a century, we rank-and-file Catholics have accepted these new responsibilities — stewards of our church — that the Vatican Council bestowed on us. Yet we also have experienced and resisted the efforts of many church leaders to take that legacy back and keep us in our place.

And we have learned about our leaders' failed oversight. We have heard, over and over, about the tragic and criminal sexual abuse of children by people we trusted. We have known some of the abusers and too many of their victims. Every time we thought that we had heard the full story, that our leaders had everything under control, we experienced the recurring trauma of hearing more. And our trauma was minimal next to that of the victims.

We also heard, over and over, public sorrows from the voices of church leaders. We have been informed of their studies and their commissions and their judgments and their decisions. Those of us who work with the church and its people — especially its children — have had our backgrounds screened. We have been trained. We have been certified. We document our compliance. We establish our "suitability" when we minister in another diocese. All because we acknowledged the truth of the abuse and took on the mission of protecting our children.

And we — thousands of us — have made children safer. Church employees and volunteers, parish priests and religious men and women, youth ministers and coaches, ministers of music, education and faith formation, our office staffs and facilities staffs, ushers and sacristans, and every person in every pew. We have made that happen.

And there is no going back. The thousands of us employed by the church, or who volunteer in our parishes, know that we cannot remain in our positions unless we

comply with the so-called Dallas Accords. Meeting in Texas, our bishops drafted those new protections in 2002, after abuse by clerics became a national scandal.

Yet we have learned that our bishops were not subject to the same scrutiny. Not all of the rules that applied to us applied to them. As we honored reporting procedures and documented our compliance, some bishops opted out of the annual audit process that we thought they had to follow.

And now, once again, we experience more revelations of abuse. More trauma. A recent Pennsylvania investigation reveals yet again the weakness of "internal investigations." It reveals the unwillingness or unpreparedness of some bishops — and some higher-ranking church leaders — to confront these tragedies as they unfolded. They didn't report. They didn't impose consequences. And we have learned that these bishops are not accountable to one another. That the Dallas Accords dealt primarily with priests, not bishops. That only Rome can supervise those bishops.

After Dallas, our national conference of bishops should have quickly and urgently and publicly demanded equal compliance in every diocese. America's bishops should have stormed the papal offices demanding compliance from all their brethren. Instead, the tradition of bishops not publicly criticizing one another has been part of the problem. But concealment and transparency cannot co-exist. So our crisis grows worse.

After Pennsylvania, after all we're learning, our church will never be the same. We, the people in the pews, will save the Catholic Church. This epiphany comes not only because Pennsylvania has brought us to a terrible moment. It comes in part because, after all these years of sadness and grief, I finally cried.

On Sept. 8, I worshipped at Saturday evening Mass to support a friend who was presiding and preaching. When he spoke of the hurt that we have all experienced as sisters and brothers in the Catholic community, he asked all of us sitting in the pews to remember that we are the church. We cannot and should not rely on a pope or a cardinal or a bishop. He reminded us that we do not demand our church's healing and reform from others. Healing and reform are our responsibility.

As my brother priest spoke, those of us coming to realize we must save our church applauded. An uncontrollable flow of tears ran down my face. After my long career as a priest, I felt anew what I had learned in the 1960s: We in the pews are the church. And we, not the hierarchy, must be its healers.

As I wept, I remembered when a mother walking toward me pulled her young sons close to her as she saw my black suit and Roman collar. I remembered the victim of abuse who told me that whenever he sees a man wearing a black suit and Roman collar, he sees his abuser. I remembered the relatives of victims saying how the thought of being in the church where the abuse had happened still overwhelms them.

We have much work to do. We must reform how our church is governed. And we must replace anyone who has allowed the wounding to continue again and again. As we move to rescue our church and embrace those victims, I hope we all feel the tears.

Rev. Bill Stenzel is a retired pastor of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Why I'm not leaving the Catholic Church by John Gehring – National Catholic Reporter

If there ever was a time for a demoralized Catholic to pack it up, head to the nearest Episcopal church and declare himself a refugee from religious malpractice, the most recent round of clergy sexual abuse scandals would seem ample justification.

As the Pennsylvania grand jury report discloses in painful detail, the institutional evil and brazen culture of cover-up that allows predators to abuse with impunity befouls the air like a mobster's cigar. The Mafioso analogy might seem overwrought, but *omertà* — the Mob's code of silence about criminal activity — feels like an apt description in this case. The Pennsylvania grand jury, after consultation with the FBI, described the way church officials acted as "a playbook" for concealing the truth.

I've been asked by friends who aren't Catholic, and some former Catholics over the years, how a progressive could stay in a church that doesn't allow gay people to marry or how I could be part of a patriarchal institution that refuses to ordain women.

I sputtered out answers that were likely insufficient, not logically airtight, and probably unacceptable for some. For me, and I would guess for many Catholics, the church is not like a political party's platform that you parse for complete alignment with your preferred ideology or policy goals. My faith is more naturally compared to the complicated bonds of family and tribe, a place where you feel most at home even when the people in your own living room sometimes drive you mad.

Questions about my Catholic identity are becoming harder to answer in recent weeks. How could somebody choose to associate with a church where the words predators and cover-up are now commonplace in headlines? Of course, the abuse crisis isn't new. The National Catholic Reporter was chasing down the story almost two decades before The Boston Globe broke its bombshell investigations in 2002. Nevertheless, the latest revelations about former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick — the first American cardinal in history to resign from the College of Cardinals — and the news that 300 priests in six different Pennsylvania dioceses abused at least a thousand children, feels different. No longer is there any doubt about the scale of this systemic evil. If what took place in Boston wasn't the *norm*, the details from Pennsylvania also prove it wasn't an *aberration* or isolated.

While it's true that most of these abuse cases occurred years ago, and the U.S. bishops' implemented a Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002 that helped significantly reduce the number of abuses in recent years, this has been a summer of anguish for Catholics. The church feels at a breaking point.

In the middle of Mass last Sunday, a father in Georgia stood up with a searing question for his priest that reverberates far beyond one parish: "I have a son. He's going to make his first Communion. What am I supposed to tell him?" This is a question and a haunting lament. About 5,000 Catholics, including theologians and scholars, have signed on a

statement calling on every bishop in the country to resign. The poetry of William Butler Yeats comes to mind: "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold."
So why am I still Catholic?

The church has always been a flawed, sinful, human institution filled with darkness and light. In part, I go to church these days to grapple with those contradictions, to find healing in the Eucharist and strength standing next to my fellow weary travelers.

I like to imagine those who became improbable saints — the Christ-denying Peter and the persecuting Saul who found redemption as Paul — looking down and reminding me that Jesus never abandons us, especially in our darkest hours, even when we don't know the way home. I refuse to let the church I love, still filled with grace, be handed over to men who abused children, abused power and defiled the sacred.

The writer James Baldwin remarked that he loved this country so much that he insisted on the right to criticize it perpetually. I feel the same way about the Catholic Church. I've lost trust in some bishops and cardinals. I still believe in the people of God.

While some of our captains who wear those pompous hats and expect to be called "your eminence" have steered the ship badly off course, those of us down in steerage class are the reason the ship hasn't completely sunk. We journeyed too long and weathered too many storms to let this vessel crash on rocks without a struggle.

I'm probably writing this as a form of therapy. I'm piecing words together to form some order amid the chaos, trying to remind myself that the best lights that illuminated my path came from the same church that now seems shrouded in darkness. Catholic nuns who taught me about justice and dignity. Jesuit priests who taught me to pray and discern and think. Franciscans who reminded me that the grandeur and glory of God can be revered in a forest as much as any cathedral.

I'm grateful to those I never met but who are spiritual teachers: Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton. I want to summon all of that goodness and wisdom and spirit. I need it as medicine for healing. Fuel to keep believing. So with all those companions, living and dead, I will keep showing up. Together, we might rebuild our church again.

[John Gehring is Catholic program director at Faith in Public Life, and author of *The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope's Challenge to the American Catholic Church*.]

Katie Prejean McGrady - August 27, 2018

I went to bed Saturday night with a feeling of deep sadness. After reading the 11-page bombshell testimony of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the former apostolic nuncio to the United States, in which he alleges that bishops, cardinals and Pope Francis himself knew about the allegations of abuse against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick and continued to support him in his ministry, I truly did not know what to think. The question that kept running through my head as I turned off the light and tossed and turned for hours was simply: If it is true, what do we do now? What happens next?

The same question weighed on my mind Sunday morning as my family and I made breakfast. My 1-year-old sat in her high chair, blissfully chewing on bananas and avocado toast. My husband brewed a pot of coffee. I made waffles. And as I laid my daughter down for her 9 a.m. nap and got ready to go to 11 a.m. Mass, I thought for a split second: "Do I really want to go today? How can I? What's the point?"

I think a lot of us are asking those questions as day after day another round of news sends tremors through the church. One day there are reports of terrible abuse and systemic cover-ups. Then there are confirmed rumors about a former cardinal doing awful things to the very men being formed to serve the church. The next day, there are allegations that this abuse and cover-up and immorality goes all the way to the top of the hierarchy. Caught in the midst of the news storm are the normal churchgoing Catholics who pray their rosaries, hang crucifixes on their walls, raise their children in the faith and diligently give of their hard-earned money to keep the church's lights on. Now suddenly asking they are, "What do we do now?"

So what do we do?

We pray. More than we ever have, with more fervor, passion and hope than ever before. We cry out in anguish, we cling to the merciful and just Lord, and we beg him to cast out Satan and all his evil works and shed light on the truth.

We go to Mass. We sit in that pew, we sing, we sit, we stand, we kneel, we receive the Eucharist, and we go forth proclaiming the Gospel with our very lives, knowing full well that without the Mass, we will not survive, and without us, the church will not be who she needs to be in the world.

We demand transparency. We insist upon independent and thorough investigations, from top to bottom. We write letters. We attend listening sessions. We demand that no complaint go uninvestigated, no file unopened. It all must be revealed, no matter what may be found and no matter how hard it may be to see. The only way to heal the wound is to expose it completely so that the infection can be completely dug out.

We stay. We remain. We proudly, definitively and without hesitation declare that we are Catholic, and we live our Catholic faith more boldly than ever before.

I know this is all far easier to write about than it will be to execute. When staring into the face of abuse and grave sins, it would be far easier to simply walk away. When people go looking for answers to injustices in the church, sometimes lies are told and sides are almost always picked. We look at this church and think: "How can I stay here, in the midst of this sickness and destruction and dishonesty? Surely there's someplace better."

But there isn't. Despite hurt and confusion and fear and doubt, we are called to remain, firmly rooted in the belief that Jesus Christ established this church, built it upon a rock and calls us to stay.

Jesus once slept in the bottom of a boat in the middle of a terrible storm. He napped. The apostles were bailing out water, trying to navigate stormy seas, and Jesus was taking a snooze. He woke up to the screams of the apostles, "Do you even care if we perish?"

Jesus calmed that storm, and he will calm this one, too. And we need to be here when he does.

I still went to Mass Sunday morning, and I prayed the Nicene Creed with pride, saying each word louder than I ever have before. I still received the Eucharist and knew, without an inkling of doubt, that without it I would not survive any of this. I still prayed a rosary with my child Sunday afternoon, thumbing each bead, begging Mary, the mother of the church, to lead us closer to her son. I will still serve the church as best I can, however I can, whenever I am called to.

What do we do now? What happens next? We stay Catholic. We are not Catholic because of men in collars who do or do not do the right thing. We, all sinners united in the pursuit of a relationship with Jesus, are the church. We stay Catholic because we need one another now more than ever.

We are Catholic because Jesus Christ established this church, unites us in this church, and even in the midst of turmoil and confusion and hurt and fear, we do not walk away. We do not bail out. We stay. We pray. We fight. We lead. We yell out to Jesus and beg him to calm the storm, and we stand there in awe, with steadfast faith, and watch as he does.

Katie Prejean McGrady was a U.S. delegate sent by the U.S.C.C.B. to the Vatican's pre-synod gathering of young people. She is a Catholic speaker and the author of [Follow: Your Lifelong Adventure with Jesus](#). She lives in Lake Charles, La., with her husband and daughter.

Why, despite the Catholic Church's problems, I still go to Mass

Mary Wisniewski Contact Reporter - mwisniewski@chicagotribune.com

Last week was tough. There was distressing news, including an earthquake in Indonesia and bitter partisan divides over the Supreme Court. At home, family members were sick. I felt sad and angry, and I did not know what to do.

So on Sunday, I did something I always do, which always helps. I went to Mass.

I have many, many problems with the Catholic Church. Many of its leaders failed miserably at protecting children. The institutional church is backward in its views about women and gays. After growing up Catholic, and taking it so seriously I considered becoming a nun, I left the church at 15. I had read Bertrand Russell and decided I was an atheist.

But I still had a longing for something beyond the material world. I studied Judaism, and then practiced Buddhism. I finally came back to my birth church when I was 30. I figured that at least with Catholicism, I knew where most of the nonsense was. I wouldn't have to waste time being awed by the exotic, and I could concentrate on sorting out ideas about God and morality, life and death. For all the sins committed by the institution, the practice of Catholicism can offer a path to the transcendent, to what is beyond ourselves. It is a tough journey, the search for God, and it helps not to be alone.

I go to Mass every week — sometimes more than once — and participate in the ancient ritual. I cantor or lector, and sing in the choir. And it helps because, apart from its anachronisms, the church gives me something I need. Every week it invites me into a conversation about the power of love and the search for peace, and the necessity of going beyond our individual needs and looking at the needs of others. It is a call to community and sharing, in a world that tries to focus our attention on selfishness and possessions and tribalism.

Sometimes I engage with the Gospel and the scriptures on an intellectual level — sometimes I just sit there, numbed by the events of the week, and appreciate both the physical and liturgical architecture. Being at a Catholic Mass is like being inside a sonnet — though what's inside changes, the structure stays the same, with the Gloria, the Alleluia, the Sanctus, the Agnus Dei. It's comforting to know that the same ritual, the same structure, is being repeated every day in hundreds of languages around the world.

I love the mundane things about the church too. We had a blood drive and doughnut and coffee social last Sunday, with a raffle, because so many church events come with a raffle. We'll have a big ethnic festival in a few weeks when we'll celebrate the 90th anniversary of our building, and people will bring food from the Philippines, Mexico, Poland, Germany and Ireland. A Eucharistic minister thanked the choir for singing happy birthday to his mother, who had turned 96. I laughed at the cartoon our choir director had set on the table by the piano ("This month — pumpkin spice-flavored

Communion!") I got to look at babies, bouncing to the music. I got to sing with my daughter. These things, too, are church.

It is these things — the reach for transcendence and the power of community — that all faiths offer. I find them in Catholicism because it's the faith I know. But Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and other paths offer them too. We are all reaching for something beyond ourselves, and we hope to be made better by the effort — even if our reach must always exceed our grasp. As another lapsed-then-unlapsed Catholic, Oscar Wilde, said, "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

I recognize the violence that has been committed in the name of religion. But religious institutions are made by humans, and humans are flawed. Blaming a faith itself for the sins committed in its name is like blaming a hammer for bashing someone in the head. It is the misuse of a tool that can also be used for good.

People have asked me how I, as a progressive and a feminist, can stay in the church with all its problems. I stay for the same reason I stay in the United States, whose leaders also have been guilty of crimes throughout the decades. It is beautiful, and it belongs to me. It is my home. Why should I let some ignorant old guys keep it for themselves? Unless I'm actually driven out, bell, book and candle, I'll stay, and serve, and work for peace.

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION – FR. BRIAN FISCHER – SEPTEMBER 11, 2018

This past weekend Fr. Paul invited any parishioners of St. Gregory the Great who would like to attend, to a discussion of the clergy abuse scandal afflicting the Church. A group of about twenty-five parishioners gathered after the 10:30 Mass to share their thoughts and feelings, their questions and prescriptions.

There were expressions of anger at the traumatic damage and emotional heartbreak that the abuse itself has caused to the victims and their families. There was anger, too, at the efforts of the hierarchy of the Church to suppress and cover up the crimes and the scandal they have caused. Some expressed anguish and a sense of betrayal. Several voiced a nagging ambivalence about identifying themselves as Catholic, and uncertainty about whether they can remain. There was wide agreement that the extent of the scandal is still unknown, and that it's apt to get worse before it gets better.

Betrayal. Anger. Heartbreak. Ambivalence. Mistrust.

There was wide agreement that the steps that the American bishops took with their 'Dallas Charter' in 2002 were inadequate, and frustration with the darkness and secrecy that surround so many of the hierarchy's deliberations and decisions. Several members of St. Gregory's Parish Pastoral Council participated in the meeting, and helped by explaining the structures and processes within the archdiocese for consultation and communication between Cardinal Cupich and the laity. It was agreed that we should use those structures and processes to express our concerns to the Cardinal. Some expressed surprise and regret that meetings like yesterday's, here at St. Gregory's, aren't happening elsewhere. Fr. Paul reported that there would be further deliberation by our own Parish Pastoral Council, at their next meeting, on what further steps we should take. Some suggested that we include prayers during our Masses for the welfare and protection of children, and the improvement of the Church's response to this crisis. If you missed the meeting but would like to share your own thoughts, please write to Fr. Paul, Sr. Regina or myself. I would humbly ask that we all bring this anger, heartbreak and worry into our own daily prayers.

This scandal has been unfolding here in the United States across more than twenty-five years, although we know that the abuse that triggered it goes back much further. The Church will be reaping the bitter harvest of these failures for generations.

The Church is broken. Its brokenness reminds me of a phrase I learned in seminary, popularized by the renowned Swiss, Protestant scripture scholar, Karl Barth, who borrowed the inspiration for it from St. Augustine: "Ecclesia semper reformanda est."

"The Church is ever-reforming. The Church is ever being reformed."

It has to be.

Let us pray that it be Christ, guiding the reform. - Fr. Brian Fischer