



## **Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange Statement on Sexual Abuse by Clergy**

The recent news detailing the extensive and sometimes brutal sexual abuse committed by Catholic priests in the United States has left us sickened and ashamed of the Church we love, trust, and have committed our lives to serve. We weep and grieve with all who over the decades have been victimized by sexual predators within the faith community. We recognize that the damage done to many is irreparable.

Sexual abuse is a horrific crime, and the horror is so much worse when committed by persons in whom society has placed its trust and confidence. Equally difficult to comprehend is the culture within the Church hierarchy that tolerated the abuse, left children and vulnerable adults subject to further abuse, and created practices that covered up the crimes and protected the abusers.

We call upon the Church leadership to implement plans immediately to support more fully the healing of all victims of clergy abuse, hold abusers accountable, and work to uncover and address the root causes of the sexual abuse crisis. We believe that the work to implement the 2002 [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) and its subsequent revisions has been an important and effective step in addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. We have watched the Conference of Major Superiors of Men diligently work to assure the protection and safety of children and youth and applaud its efforts. However, it is clear that more serious action needs to be taken to assure that the culture of secrecy and cover-up ends.

We also call upon Church leaders to attend to the severe erosion of the Church's moral standing in the world. Its members are angry, confused, and struggling to find ways to make sense of the Church's failings. The Church leadership needs to speak with honesty and humility about how this intolerable culture developed and how that culture will now be deconstructed, and to create places where Church members can express our anger and heartbreak. We call on the leaders to include competent members of the laity more fully in the work to eradicate abuse and change the culture, policies, and practices. We are committed to collaborate in the essential work of healing and transformation that our Church so desperately needs.

We recognize that the vast majority of priests have not committed abuse and are suffering greatly because of the actions of some of their brothers. We offer them our prayer and support as they continue their ministries in these very challenging times and as they too struggle to understand the complexity of factors that led to this deplorable situation.

As Sisters of St. Joseph we know the hard work of unity and reconciliation in our bones. This work demands of us humility, vulnerability and self-emptying love. This is a time when we want to be a safe harbor for people who need to express their hurt, anger and disillusion with the hierarchy of the Church. For our Church to come to healing and



wholeness, we must have the courage to engage in this work together and be open to wherever it might lead us.

If you would like to talk with someone to help you process your experiences, please contact Sister Linda Buck, CSJ at the Open Door Center for Integrative Healing at [lbuck@theopendoorcenter.org](mailto:lbuck@theopendoorcenter.org) or (714) 332-1201. Sister Linda is a licensed psychotherapist who will assist you in finding the correct resources for your particular needs.

*Adapted from the [Leadership Conference for Women Religious' Statement on Sexual Abuse by Clergy](#) (Aug. 20, 2018)*

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