

Merciful Discipline 1: Broken, We Pray for the Abused

This is the first post of six in the *Merciful Discipline Series*. A complete list of available posts will be at the end of each article as they are made available.

Merciful Discipline 1: Broken, We Pray for the Abused

No wound runs deeper in the Church today than the sexual abuse of children by her priests. Over the last 30 years, the wound has become apparent as brave, broken souls throughout the world have dared to confess the perversion deposited in them by priests.

We the Church bear this wound. We are the broken: bewildered, angry, more tempted to strike the Church than to heal her. And yet we are 'her', the wounded bride, as needful of her graces as we are appalled at her failures.

Gratefully, we serve a wounded God who Himself suffered unjustly in order to bind up our wounds. He invites us to into His Mercy that we the Church might be healed and so become a healing arm for the abused.

How can we do this, mere laymen and laywomen? We gather, we bend the knee, we cry out with repentant hearts on behalf of those damaged by the Church. We cry out for Mercy for those most in need of it. Might the water released from His side cleanse those bearing the shame of another? Might His blood administer new life to broken lives? Might we become the face and hand of Jesus for those scattered by evil shepherds?

We take up both a priestly and prophetic call when we pray rightfully for the abused. We become a part of His solution for His wounded bride.

His wounds are the only just response to the wounds of those sexually abused by priests. Only His wounds, extended tenderly and patiently, can cleanse the 'abuse' wound and send its evil source to flight.

Consider the evil: the Roman Catholic Church is the last coherent institution on earth with a sexual morality that upholds the dignity of each individual, beginning with conception. Her teaching advocates for each life from the start, and upholds each as an inviolable sexual gift, instructing him/her to protect that gift until marriage. Her priests model that sanctity, and encourage little ones to walk accordingly, with priestly help.

When priests become predatory, the Church herself becomes an arm of evil. Her morality and mission are torpedoed; children are left in the wreckage, defiled and disoriented by one who was supposed to mirror his/her dignity.

While Catholic morality encourages sexual integrity (wholeness), sexual abuse provokes sexual disintegration. It fractures his/her gender identity, and moral clarity; abuse clouds one's vision for a whole Christian life in general.

Such disintegration is rooted in the Greek word for devil: 'diabolos.' It means 'to throw apart', in other words, to disintegrate. Perhaps that is the most precise way of defining the impact of priestly sexual abuse of children—disintegration.

Does that not break Jesus' heart and ours? The 'throwing apart' of a child in Jesus' name violates His very purpose for the Church: to protect and redeem the wholeness of every life.

Priestly abuse is particularly diabolical because of the spiritual power of the abuser. In assessing the depth of abuse, one must consider: was the abuser someone that the child trusted and had good reason to rely upon? The spiritual power of the abuser amplifies the impact of sexual abuse.

In other words, an abusive priest intensifies the act of sexual abuse with spiritual abuse. He manipulates the sheep for his own purposes; instead of feeding them, he partakes of them.

Arguably, priestly sexual abuse has done more to disintegrate the mission of the Church than any other single force over the last 50 years.

We consider the damage done in His Name so we can be a part of His solution: crying out for Mercy for the wounded Church, and in particular, for her children that have been 'thrown apart' by sexual abuse.

We are 'to mourn with those who mourn.' (Romans 12:15) 'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it'. (1 Corinthians 12:26) When one member of the body is abused, we each share in that suffering. I urge you: may our shame in the light of priestly abuse be transformed into prayerful solidarity with the abused?

Might you [join me this Lent in crying out for a river of Mercy to be released](#) in the Church for her abused? As we reflect upon His wounds, might we also intercede for the binding up of the

disintegrating effect of abuse?

May those sexually abused receive the first fruit of Your suffering, Holy God. Unite them in Your healing arms, through trustworthy members of Your Body.

Pope Benedict recently reflected:

I think of the immense suffering caused by the abuse of children, especially within the Church and her ministers. Above all, I express my deep sorrow to the innocent victims of these unspeakable crimes, along with my hope that the power of Christ's grace, His sacrifice of reconciliation, will bring deep healing and peace to their lives. I acknowledge with you the shame and humiliation which all of us have suffered because of these sins; I invite you to offer it to the Lord, and trust that this chastisement will contribute to the healing of victims, the purification of the Church, and the renewal of her age-old commitment to the education and care of young people.

MORE:

The *Merciful Discipline Series* of Posts (updated with each new post as they become available):

- [Merciful Discipline 1: Broken, We Pray for the Abused](#)
- [Merciful Discipline 2: Broken, We Repent for the Church's Mishandling of Abuse](#)
- [Merciful Discipline 3: Broken, We Endure Shame](#)
- [Merciful Discipline 4: Hopeful, We Rebuild Trust](#)
- [Merciful Discipline 5: Hopeful, We Fight for the Dignity and Integrity of Our Priests](#)
- [Merciful Discipline 6: Humbled, We Shine](#)