



*A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care*

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***Statement on Church Scandal by Sister Carol Keehan, DC, President & Chief Executive Officer  
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As members of the Church's healing ministry, CHA has been stunned, ashamed and angry as the information on the horrific sexual abuse of minors and others in vulnerable situations by members of the clergy has been revealed. We grieve with the whole Church in learning about the denial, cover-up and treatment of victims by some in authority in the Church.

We see victims of physical, mental and sexual trauma on a daily basis and know too well how deep and long-lasting this trauma can be. We see that apologies, while necessary, do not fully heal these wounds nor does compensation.

We as Church must make our first priority the victims and do all we can to help them heal. We know from them that the trauma of the abuse itself has often been exacerbated by the refusal to hear them, to believe them and to effectively deal with the abuser.

We must deal with this as Church. Everyone has something to contribute to restore the integrity and compassion to our Church. For all of us, it requires humility and a willingness to participate in the healing process. This is a problem that will require the gifts of the whole Church. It is not a problem that the hierarchy can solve alone. This will require a new way of dealing with serious issues based on Gospel principles. The dignity of each person must be at the center. Transparency and accountability also must be integral to the process. These problems must be dealt with openly as painful as that can be. The talents God has given to the whole people of God must be employed. The insights and competence of men and women, lay and ordained, must be used to protect children and others. Those in authority must be accountable for ensuring this protection and effectively dealing with abusers.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has been clear that apologies, while necessary, are not enough. We must pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and listen to those who have been abused as we craft efforts at reconciliation, healing and protection. As painful as the shame we feel is, it is a sign of hope. There is great love for the Church and what Christ calls us to be. There is a passion for getting it right, protecting children, using everyone's gifts to make our Church the safest place for them and living lives of integrity and commitment to the Gospel.

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We know there have been horrible abuses, disgraceful cover-ups, dishonesty and failure to treat victims and their families with respect and compassion.

We as health professionals must also recognize that medical treatments prescribed for abusers decades ago failed in terms of clinical efficacy and were ultimately a disservice to the victims.

We know, too, there are thousands of committed priests who have labored for years to live holy and dedicated lives and who unfortunately often feel tainted by the sins of their brothers. They deserve our prayers, love, and support as they struggle with their anger and pain. This is a pivotal moment for our Church and it can be a moment of grace. In addition to helping victims to heal, we must make clear and firm decisions about the corrections needed. With prayer, we can move from a natural reaction of anger and lashing out to one of a commitment to correcting this as one corrects someone one loves.

This is the Body of Christ and we want it to be stronger and more loving after the correction. As members of CHA, we stand ready to help in any way we can.

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