



Listening & Learning: Stories of Survivors

Hope and Healing in the Diocese of Albany

Thoughts from a Survivor: Elements of a Healing Homily

March 7, 2024

Acknowledgement

- Abuse was committed and it was not always handled properly. Abuse was handled internally and not reported to outside authorities. Internal Church policies did not always address the matter and remove abusers from further abuse.
- Victims were not at fault. Victims often feel guilt or responsibility after abuse occurs. They feel as if they may have brought on the abuse in some way. This is not true.
- Abuse can cause lifetime injuries for victims, leading to isolation, anxiety, depression, addiction, inability to form close relationships, sexual dysfunction, hypervigilance to name a few.
- The trust of congregations was betrayed. Parishioners no longer felt that the Church was a safe place for themselves or their children.

Apologize

- An expression of real regret and sorrow for the pain that has been caused.
- An apology to the congregation for failing them, in not protecting vulnerable members, in not fulfilling the responsibility to protect and not harm.

Prevention

- Enumerate the steps that have been taken to prevent future abuse.
- State that victims will be believed when reported.
- Explain the reporting mechanisms within the Church to prevent coverup.
- Explain training that has or will be completed to educate clergy and staff to understand, recognize and prevent future abuse.
- Explain other safeguards that have been put into place to prevent future abuse

Reparation

- Explain legal actions underway to establish reparations.
- Explain other therapeutic options offered to victims.
- Explain punitive steps that have been taken for abusers, and what process will be taken in the future.



Forgiveness

- Recognize that forgiveness for survivors is a long-term process, and not always achievable.
- Forgiveness from the congregation must also be earned. Trust is earned and not given and takes sustained efforts to re-establish.

The contributor of these thoughts has graciously given their permission to publish on the Hope and Healing webpage.