



INCONTRO
LA PROTEZIONE DEI MINORI NELLA CHIESA
Vaticano, 21-24 febbraio 2019

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE

21 February 2019

PREPARED TEXT

WORKING TRANSLATION

First Testimony

First of all I want to thank the Commission for allowing me to address you today and the Holy Father for all the support and help he has given us in recent times.

They asked me to talk about the pain that comes from sexual abuse. Everyone knows that sexual abuse leaves tremendous consequences for everyone. I therefore believe that it is not worthwhile to continue to talk about this because the consequences are evident, in all aspects, and remains for the whole of life.

Instead I would like to speak about myself as a Catholic, of what happened to me and of what I would like to say to the bishops. For a Catholic, the most difficult thing is to be able to speak about sexual abuse; but once you have taken courage and start telling - in our case, I speak of myself - the first thing I thought was: I'm going to tell everything to Holy Mother Church, where they will listen to me and respect me. The first thing they did was to treat me as a liar, turn their backs and tell me that I, and others, were enemies of the Church. This pattern exists not only in Chile: it exists all over the world, and this must end.

I know that you are there talking as to how to end this phenomenon, how to prevent it from happening again, and how to remedy of all this evil. First of all: false forgiveness, forced forgiveness does not work. Victims need to be believed,

respected, cared for and healed. You need to repair what has been done to the victims, be close to them, believe them and accompany them. You are the physicians of the soul and yet, with rare exceptions, you have been transformed - in some cases - into murderers of the soul, into murderers of the faith. What a terrible contradiction. I wonder: but what does Jesus think. What does Mary think, when she sees that it is her own shepherds who betray their own little sheep? I ask you, please collaborate with justice, because you have a special care for the victims, so that what is happening in Chile, that is, what the Pope is doing in Chile, be repeated as a model in other countries of the world.

We see the tip of the iceberg every day: although the Church says it's all over, cases continue to emerge: why? Because it proceeds like when you are diagnosed with a tumour: you must treat the whole cancer, not just remove the tumour; so you need chemotherapy, radiotherapy, you need to have some treatment. It is not enough to remove the tumour and that's it. I ask you to listen to what the Holy Father wants to do, not limiting yourself with a nod of ascent made with your head and then do something else. The only thing I ask of you - and I ask the Holy Spirit - to help restore that trust in the Church – that those who do not want to listen to the Holy Spirit and who want to continue to cover-up, leave the Church to give way to those who want to create a new Church, a renewed Church and a Church absolutely free from sexual abuse. I entrust all this to the Virgin, to the Lord, so that all this becomes a reality. We cannot continue with this crime to cover the scourge of sexual abuse in the Church. I hope that the Lord and Mary will enlighten you and that, once and for all, we work with justice to remove this cancer from the Church, because it is destroying it. And this is what the devil wants. Thank you.

Second Testimony

Q. - What hurt you most in life?

R. - From the age of 15 I had sexual relations with a priest. This lasted for 13 years. I got pregnant three times and he made me have an abortion three times, quite simply because he did not want to use condoms or contraceptives. At first I trusted him so much that I did not know he could abuse me. I was afraid of him, and every time I refused to have sex with him, he would beat me. And since I was completely dependent on him economically, I suffered all the humiliations he inflicted on me. We had these relationships both in his home, in the village and in the diocesan reception centre. In this relationship I did not have the right to have "boyfriends"; whenever I had one and he came to know about it, he would beat me up. That was the condition for helping me economically . He gave me everything I wanted, when I accepted to have sex; otherwise he would beat me.

Q. - How did you deal with all these wounds and how do you feel now

R. - I feel I have a life destroyed. I have suffered so many humiliations in this relationship that I do not know what the future holds for me ... This made me very cautious in my relationships, now.

D. - What message do you want to pass to the bishops?

R. - It must be said that to love, essentially is to love freely: when a person loves someone you think of their future, of their good. You cannot abuse a person this way. It must be said that priests and religious have a way of helping and at the same time also destroying: they have to behave like leaders, wise people.

D. - Thank you very much. Your contribution will be very significant for the Bishops' Meeting. Thanks again.

Third testimony

R. - I am 53 years old, I am a religious priest. This year is the 25th of my ordination. I am grateful to God. What hurt me? An encounter with a priest hurt me. As a teenager, after my conversion, I went to the priest so he could teach me how to read Scriptures during Mass; and he touched my private parts. I spent a night in his bed. This hurt me deeply. The other thing that hurt me was the bishop to whom, after many years, as an adult, I talked about the incident. I went to him together with my provincial. First, I wrote a letter to the bishop, six months later, I had a meeting with the priest. The bishop did not answer me, and after six months, I wrote to the nuncio. The nuncio reacted showing understanding. Then I met the bishop and he attacked me without trying to understand me, and this hurt me. On the one hand the priest, and on the other, this bishop who What did I feel? I feel bad, because neither that priest, nor the bishop answered my letter, and it's been 8 years and he has not even answered. What would I like to say to the bishops? That they listen to these people; that they learn to listen to the people who speak. I wanted someone to listen to me, to know who that man is, that priest and what he does. I forgive that priest from the heart, and the bishop. I thank God for the Church, I am grateful to be in the Church. I have many priest friends who have helped me.

Fourth testimony: original language

Hello

I appreciate this outreach to survivors of clergy sexual abuse and I am happy to participate in this project.

What has wounded me the most? As I reflect on that question I think back to the total... to the full realization of the total loss of the innocence of my youth and how that has affected me today.

There's still pain in my family relationships. There's still pain with my siblings. I still carry pain. My parents still carry pain at the dysfunction, the betrayal, the manipulation that this bad man, who was our Catholic priest at the time, wrought upon my family and myself.

So that's what has wounded me the most and what I carry with me today.

I am doing well now because I have found hope and healing by telling my story, by sharing my story with my family, my wife and my children – my extended family – my friends, and because I can do that, I feel more comfortable with myself and how I can be myself.

And finally what I want to tell the bishops - I think that's an excellent question: I would ask the bishops for leadership. Leadership and vision and courage.

That's what I respond to, that's what I hope to see. I have a personal experience of leadership, and how it has affected me personally. One of my finest memories of Francis Cardinal George is when he spoke about the difficulties of fellow priests who have abused, and I considered those words, coming from a man in his position, even though they must be really hard for him to say, they were the right and proper thing to say. I thought that was leadership at the time, and I think it's leadership now. And I thought if he could put himself out there, and lead by example, then I could put myself out there and I think other survivors and other Catholics and faithful people can put themselves out there, to work for resolution, and work for healing, and work for a better Church.

So we respond to leadership, we look to our bishops for leadership, I would ask the bishops to show leadership.

Thank you.

Fifth Testimony: original language

I have been sexually molested for long time, over a hundred times, and this sexual molestation has created traumas and flashbacks all across my life. It's difficult to live life, it's difficult to be with people, to get connected with people. I carried an attitude for my family, for my friends and even for God.

Every time I have spoken to the Provincials and to the Major Superiors, they have all practically covered every issue, covered the perpetrators and that kills me sometimes. It's been a long time that I have been fighting this battle... and most of the Superiors either because of the friendship are unable to *build a catch*.

I'll request the Provincials as well as the Major Superiors and the Bishops sitting in this audience to make strong acts which really put the perpetrator into place. If we want to save the Church, I think the perpetrators need to be given...

I'll request the Bishops to get their act clear because this is one of the time bombs happening in the Church of Asia. If want to save the Church, we need to put our act together and get the perpetrators to book. We should not have friendship over here but it is the act, because this act will destroy our whole generations of children. As Jesus always said, we need to be child-like not to be child sexual molestaters.