

Reflection Experience to Process the List of Marianist Accused Abusers

Created by the MLC-NA Leadership Council in partnership with the MSJC Women & Justice Issue Team

Background

On June 24, 2020, the Society of Mary released the names of brothers and priests, living and deceased, within the Marianist Family who were found to have sexually abused a minor since 1950 in the United States. While the Society of Mary has released some resources with the list, members of the Leadership Council of the Marianist Lay Community of North America (MLC-NA) wanted to make sure that our Marianist Family, and especially our laity, had an intentional reflection resource to use to process this release. The Leadership Council partnered with the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative (MSJC) Women & Justice Issue Team, who has been working for justice in terms of clericalism and abuse, to create this reflection experience.

Ground Rules

If you choose to share in community, we encourage you to individually reflect first and ask that you be aware of the different reactions and emotions in the room or virtual space. Consider how you can allow space for a variety of places on this journey of healing. For example, be sure everyone has the chance to speak, respect everyone's contributions and maintain confidentiality. You do not have to speak until you are ready. You can only speak from your own experiences. Please keep information shared by others confidential. This is challenging, triggering and impacting members of our Family differently. Be wary of offering advice to those who have experienced abuse or harassment. Be aware, kind and humble.

Opening Prayer

Creator, Healer, Redeemer,

We come to you this day with a familiar heaviness made personal.

We come to you this day with wounds opened, yet again, by power corrupted.

We come to you this day feeling dejected, angry and betrayed.

We come to you this day, pleading for a resolution to questions unanswered and feelings unresolved.

We come to You, Lord God, asking for grace.

We come to you asking for guidance.

We come to you asking for healing in our Church, in our leaders, in our survivors and in our hearts.

We come to you, O God, hear us, see us, heal us. Grant us peace.

Amen.

Journaling or Sharing

Take some time to write out or think about your responses to the following questions. We suggest that you do this individually before sharing responses within a community, if you choose to do so. Please review the ground rules above before entering into conversation about the questions below.

1. What are your initial reactions regarding the list of credibly accused?
2. Reflect on a time in your life when you have felt uncomfortable, like you don't belong or have felt harassed. Have any of these been in a space related to the Church?
3. Many are grateful for the transparency of the Province. However, that doesn't mean there aren't feelings of anger, betrayal or disbelief. Name some of these feelings.
4. How does this list impact you differently from other reports of credibly accused?
5. Many may feel conflicting emotions about this list. There may be people you have known and love on this list and it may seem contrary to what you know/knew about this person. How can you move forward, while still holding multiple truths about a person/people?
6. Why do you think this is happening in our Church?
7. What do you think you need for your own healing? What do you think the Marianist Family needs for healing? How can we move forward?

Listening Activity

[Click here](#) to listen to this 8 minute podcast episode called A Poem for Complicated Stories of Love from Poetry Unbound. The podcast reads a poem with a modern take on the Prodigal Son, from the perspective of the mother, who is not named in Scripture. This listening activity can be done in small groups, large groups or as individual reflection. Consider writing down words or phrases that strike you while you listen.

After listening to the podcast, this was a central message that spoke to us: "This family that is presented was not the story of a perfect family with one wayward sheep, but one of a dysfunctional family.... Forgiving is an ongoing process. Wounds can be reopened." Continue to process with the questions below.

1. What lines strike you? What stands out to you?
2. After listening to the poem/podcast, what new thoughts or emotions do you notice?

3. What meaning do you find in this poem?
4. Forgiveness is a prominent theme in this story. We know that forgiveness comes in time, or not at all, and is something that we have to come to and choose on our own. Do you feel like you can forgive these people and if so, what would that look like for you? If you do not wish to offer forgiveness, how can you come to a place of peace?
5. The son in the poem has made recurring, problematic and intentional choices. While the poet parallels the son's experiences to addiction, we recognize a parallel to recurring choices in our Church on matters of abuse. How do we change these systems and environments that perpetuate this harm within the Mariansit Family and the Church?

Petitions

Some petitions retrieved from the [Diocese of Chicago](#)

Please Respond: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

- For victims of abuse, may they know God's love and understand that they are not alone. May they be guided to help, support and safety. We pray to the Lord.
- Help us to be instruments of your peace and to assist the victims of abuse & their families with finding safety and hope for a better future. We pray to the Lord.
- We pray for transformation of our societies that often find it easier to judge the victims of violence than to solve the problems of injustice. We pray to the Lord.
- For our children, who are both witnesses to violence and victims themselves. Provide them with caregivers who will love and nurture them in the midst of being violated by those they trust. Keep them ever safe from all harm, we pray to the Lord.
- For our Church, we find ourselves doubtful to believe, slow to show compassion, paralyzed to act, and withholders of hope. Give us understanding and patience. Help us to respect the decisions of those who have been violated. Keep us from dictating what another should do or how they should live, as we have not walked in their shoes. Show us that we, the Church, are called to be a survivor's hope. We pray to the Lord.
- For our Marianist Family, that we can change in the way God is calling us to and to unwaveringly support and believe our survivors of harassment and abuse. We pray to the Lord.
- We pray for courage to challenge and dismantle systems of abuse and hold perpetrators accountable. We pray to the Lord.

- Feel free to share any other intentions as you pray this individually or with your community:
 - Response: Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

From [USCCB](#)

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters
who have been gravely harmed,
and the cries of those who love them.
Soothe their restless hearts with hope,
steady their shaken spirits with faith.
Grant them justice for their cause,
enlightened by your truth.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness into wholeness.
Grant us the courage and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors.
Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Resources for further reading to educate and to process

- [“The Evil of Clericalism”](#) by Nicole Trahan, FMI
- [Tracing the causes of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church](#) by Fr. James Martin
- [Deliver Us](#) Podcast by America Magazine
- [A Rubicon Moment in the Catholic Church](#) by Professor Michael Higgins
- [Power to the People: The Role of Canon Law](#) Tom Doyle (1 hr 20 min)
- [Power to the People: The Development of Clericalism](#), Francine Cardman, PhD (1 hr 12 min)
- [Power to the People: The Lay of the Land](#), Thomas Reese, SJ (1 hr 15 min)
- [The Bridges Dialogue: laity and the clergy reimagining the church](#) A collaborative effort of Voice of the Faithful, FutureChurch, & Association of U.S. Catholic Priests

Reporting Abuse

To report abuse: We encourage any survivors of sexual abuse by a Marianist to report it to civil authorities and the Province Pastoral Assistance Coordinator at pastoralassistancecoordinator@sm-usa.org or 314-285-2322.