

My Journey to Healing

A short reflection from a survivor of abuse

I am an ordinary person with an extra-ordinary God who loves, understands and walks with me on my life's journey of healing even though for years I found it hard to trust Him and was very angry and confused. I never let God go completely and through building up a relationship with, and not a knowledge of Him, many extraordinary things began to happen in my life.

I came to believe and experience that with God by your side the impossible became possible. I choose to be a survivor of abuse rather than a victim and realised that no one could fix me except myself. The first thing I needed to do was let go of my anger which was stopping the flow of positive energy and grace flowing through me. This at times was hard work. I surrounded myself with positive people. I am sorry to say that many church people were not a positive energy because they were so upset and often frightened of people like me. I sometimes felt responsible for the state of the church because of the negative vibes coming from them. I have a few very special priests and church people sent by God who have walked with me and empowered me with their love and understanding to walk my often difficult journey without feeling guilt. They did not feel sorry for me ("poor you") which used to crack me up. I feel very much if church people could have sat down with me without fear and being on the defensive I would be in a much better place now.

When my abuser died I decided to go to his funeral with my husband, not telling anyone else I was going. Before mass I went up to his coffin and told him I forgave him and let him go to God's judgement because God knows the whole story. There is a God given wisdom in the request to forgive those who harm us. First, because we need to free ourselves from the burden of anger and hurt; secondly, because those who hurt us are still human beings in need of God's mercy and peace. I will never forget the feelings of peace and joy in my heart as I left the church that day. I know that part of the reason I went was to make sure he was dead. My journey now continues with great freedom and joy in my heart.

Anon



Franciscan Province of Ireland

Safeguarding Newsletter

Sunday 18th November, 2018.



Dear Friends,



Aidan McGrath, Minister Provincial, OFM

In the concluding Mass of the World Meeting of Families, Pope Francis included a specially composed penitential rite. In that rite, he said:

"Yesterday I met with eight persons who are survivors of the abuse of power, the abuse of conscience and sexual abuse. In reflecting on what they told me, I wish to implore the Lord's mercy for these crimes and to ask forgiveness for them.

We ask forgiveness for the cases of abuse in Ireland, the abuse of power, the abuse of conscience and sexual abuse on the part of representatives of the Church. In a special way, we ask forgiveness for all those abuses that took place in different kinds of institutions directed by men and women religious and other members of the Church.

We ask forgiveness for all those times when, as a Church, we did not offer to the survivors of any type of abuse compassion and the pursuit of justice and truth by concrete actions. We ask forgiveness.

We ask forgiveness for some members of the hierarchy who took no responsibility for these painful situations and kept silent. We ask forgiveness.

May the Lord preserve and increase this sense of shame and repentance, and grant us the strength to ensure that it never happens again and that justice is done. Amen."

The Pope's words refer to serious errors that were made in the past. Today, there are structures in place to help us all make sure that our friaries and our friary churches are safe places for the young and the vulnerable. But there is no room for complacency in the Church when it comes to the issue of safeguarding children. On this Safeguarding Sunday, I should like to introduce the Province's new Designated Liaison Person, Ms Mary Tallon. She comes to us with a wide experience. Working together with her, I hope we can learn from the past and create a safe environment for all.

Designated Liaison Person for the Franciscan Province of Ireland.

I am pleased to join the Franciscan Safeguarding Office as the Designated Liaison Person, (DLP). As a registered Social Worker, I have worked in the statutory and voluntary sector for the past thirty years in the area of abuse prevention, child protection and supporting vulnerable families.

Safeguarding within the Franciscan Church community is about making it a safe, welcoming and enriching place for children, young people and adults and those who may be at risk of harm.

As DLP I have specific responsibility for ensuring that effective procedures are followed within the **Franciscan Church Community/Province of Ireland** when dealing with any concern that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused.

My role as DLP is to promote safeguarding by:

Facilitating people to make complaints about abuse.

Hearing and gathering information about any child protection/safeguarding concerns.

Offering support as follows:

- informing them of the steps being taken to address their concerns.
- accessing counselling for those who need and wish to avail of it.
- providing ongoing support in accordance with their needs and wishes.

Reporting any child protection concerns that relate to Franciscan friars, staff or volunteers to the Statutory authorities, i.e. the Gardai and Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Meeting with the friar, staff member or volunteer against whom an allegation has been made against.

Advising the Franciscan Minister Provincial on protective measures ensuring that all appropriate measures are taken to prevent any person who has offended against a child, young person or vulnerable adults from doing so again.

To work in conjunction with the Safeguarding Office to ensure the implementation of the Franciscan Province of Ireland safeguarding statement, reporting procedures and best practice guidelines.

Notifying the National Board for Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland of any child safeguarding concerns.

As Fr. Aidan McGrath has stated, there is no room for complacency when it comes to safeguarding children and the Franciscan Province of Ireland takes seriously all allegations, suspicions and concerns of child and adult abuse made against any of the friars, staff or volunteers working within the Franciscan community.

As DLP I recognise how difficult it can be to raise concerns about abuse and will try to make this process as easy as possible for all those involved. I invite anyone wishing to talk about a concern to contact me, **Mary Tallon** at: **Address: 4 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8, D08XY19.**