

When Someone in the Church Has Hurt Them

WHAT WE FOUND

- You cannot out-condemn Christ on this. Matthew 18:6 condemns causing one of his little ones to sin in terms as severe as anything you will read. Applying it to the abuse of children is an application, and a sound one; the verse's own wording is about causing his little ones to sin.
- Across the Gospels the Lord's sharpest language falls on religious leaders. He ate with tax collectors and called the scribes whitewashed tombs.
- And in the middle of that same chapter he tells the crowd to do what those men say and not what they do. A hypocrite's teaching is not thereby false, and that is his instruction rather than a later defence. Establish the sacramental principle separately, from CCC 1584, rather than treating the two as one claim.
- The Church teaches both in complementary passages: the unworthiness of the minister does not stop Christ acting in the sacraments, and that does not mean the minister is without sin. If you were baptized, married, or absolved by someone later disgraced, it counted.
- Peter was restored without pretending the denial had not happened. That is not a precedent for quietly returning anyone to ministry after they have harmed someone; his failure was cowardice about himself, not the exploitation of another person.
- There are at least three different conversations under "the Church hurt me": a wound, an institutional failure, and an objection. Most of us answer the first as though it were the third.
- The first sentence may not be a defense. For most people the true first sentence is "I am so sorry that happened to you," or "thank you for telling me." Reserve "you are right" for what you actually know.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on light passing through what is defiled

The spiritual power of a sacrament, St. Augustine wrote, is like light: those to be enlightened receive it in its purity, and if it passes through defiled beings it is not itself defiled.

The Catechism quotes him in exactly those terms when it teaches that the unworthiness of the minister does not prevent Christ from acting. This matters to anyone asking whether their own baptism or marriage or absolution still counts. The comforting part is true: a minister's unworthiness does not by itself invalidate a sacrament. Point a specific worry to a priest rather than settling it yourself, since validity turns on more than the minister.

St. Augustine, quoted at CCC 1584.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Benedict XVI, writing to a country that had been failed

In his 2010 pastoral letter to the Catholics of Ireland, Pope Benedict XVI addressed victims of abuse directly, acknowledged that they had suffered grievously, said that he was truly sorry, recognized that their trust had been betrayed and their dignity violated, and acknowledged that in many cases church authorities had failed to act as they should have.

Do not paraphrase this into something softer. A pope writing to an entire nation of Catholics said that the authorities of the Church failed. The Church, including Benedict XVI writing to Ireland, has publicly acknowledged grave abuse and serious failures by church authorities.

Pope Benedict XVI, Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland (2010). Document-level citation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Catherine of Siena, who did not leave

St. Catherine of Siena wrote to popes and cardinals in blunt and unsparing terms about corruption among churchmen, urging reform, calling the pope to act courageously rather than fearfully, and refusing to be deferential about what she thought was rotten.

And she never left. She is the model this module is aiming at: love for the Church that is fierce enough to say the true thing out loud from inside her, rather than defending what should not be defended. Her fidelity is worth commending, and it is not a judgment on people who have needed distance, boundaries or time in order to be safe.

St. Catherine of Siena, summarized from her Letters. A faithful summary of her posture and arguments, not a quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

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This week. One conversation you have been avoiding, and one sentence you have never said.

- Think of one person you know who left, or pulled back, over something that was done. Not a category of person. One person.
- Ask them what happened, if you have never asked and if they are willing. Then respond with the first sentence you practised, and little else. If what you hear involves a minor, a vulnerable adult, or anyone presently at risk, that is no longer a conversation to hold on your own: contact your diocesan safeguarding office, and civil authorities where the law requires it.
- If you are not able to have that conversation, write the first sentence down anyway and keep it.
- Find out this week who handles reporting and victim assistance in your diocese, and write the contact down. Leaders should know these contacts, so they can respond responsibly and promptly.
- And pray for the person by name, without praying that they come back. Pray for them.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us."

2 Corinthians 4:7

GOING FURTHER

Find out who handles reporting and victim assistance in your diocese, and write the contact down. If this module raised something from your own life, speak to someone you trust this week rather than carrying it alone.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 2284-2286.** Scandal, and its particular gravity when caused by those whose office obliges them to form others. CCC 2285 quotes Matthew 18:6.
- **CCC 1584.** The unworthiness of the minister does not prevent Christ from acting.
- **CCC 1550.** And that does not mean the minister is without sin.
- **CCC 827.** The Church is at once holy and always in need of purification.
- **CCC 1428.** The call to conversion is addressed to the whole Church.