



# A Message from Priests and from Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse by Clergy

Some of us are priests of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and some of us are survivors of childhood rape and sexual assault by priests. In the wake of the bankruptcy filing by the archdiocese this year, we have joined together in an ongoing dialogue about the clergy sex abuse crisis and what we can do about it.

**Today we are making an urgent appeal to victim/survivors to come forward before the closing of the February 1, 2012 bankruptcy bar date, and we offer our help.**

The sexual abuse of a minor by a priest is a crime and a sin. If you were sexually violated by a member of the clergy it was not your fault. We want you to know that:

- If you suffered this violation you are not alone.
- There are many survivors who have come forward and are receiving the care and assistance that they need.
- There are many resources in our community that are available to assist you.
- To be believed you must be heard. No one else will know unless you tell them.
- We stand by you and support you.

**EACH OF US BELIEVES** that at the center of the human heart is an absolute longing for justice. We are committed to creating a true and lasting community of justice.

Over the next months we want to widen our conversation to include other priests and survivors in the archdiocese, especially those who have already expressed a desire to join with us.

**AS PRIESTS AND PASTORS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE,** we publicly declare our unqualified support to every victim/survivor. We hold ourselves and our institution fully accountable for any action or inaction that may have allowed these crimes to occur, the offender to go unpunished, and other children to be harmed. We are truly sorry that this happened to you.

We believe that, in order for our church and our community to heal, there will have to be a full institutional accounting of the crimes that have taken place in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Victim/survivors and their families have told us how important it is that they know the truth about what happened in their church. It is also important for each one of us.

Obviously, we are very tardy in making this public statement of apology, support, and accountability; however, making this statement now is better than remaining silent.

**AS VICTIM/SURVIVORS OF THESE CRIMES,** we declare our unqualified support for every priest who takes the courageous step of publicly standing with survivors.

Shame is logically and naturally created when a child is sexually violated. That shame is rarely, if ever, felt by the offender. Instead, the offender pours that shame into the body of the child. If justice does not intervene to lift that weight, eventually the soul and aspirations of that child will be crushed by it.

If even the possibility of spiritual reconciliation with the church is to become real and effective for survivors, priests of the archdiocese must courageously join us and insist upon a full and public confession. That confession must include the open publication of all abuse-related documents held by the Archdiocese and the religious orders serving in the Archdiocese. The confession must further provide a full and explanatory list of all clerics and employees who have harmed children and minors.

**SEX OFFENDERS ALWAYS COMMIT TWO CRIMES:** first they steal the body; then they steal the voice. Recovery from sexual violence—for the victim, for the offender, and for an institution—is the resurrection of the voice through words of truth.

*We want hope for survivors. We want healing for them. We want a new day for the church.*

For victim/survivors who may still be living in silence or shame, we hope this public plea from us—as survivors and priests working together—will encourage you to come forward before February 1, 2012. That is the court deadline for filing a case for restitution through the bankruptcy process. Listed below are resources that can provide help and guidance with your decision.

Peter J. Isely, MS, M.Div, LCSW, SNAP Midwest Director (survivor)  
 John Pilmaier, MSW, APSW, SNAP Wisconsin Director (survivor)  
 Mike Sneesby, SNAP Milwaukee Director (survivor)  
 Marilyn Pilmaier, RN, BSN (mother of survivor)  
 Vicky A. Schneider, MAPS (survivor)  
 Karen Konter, female advocate (survivor)

Fr. Richard Cerpich | Fr. James Connell  
 Fr. Gregory Greiten | Fr. Howard G. Haase

**Resources in our community:**

**The Healing Center:** 414-671-4325  
<http://thehealingcenter.org/>

**Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault:**  
 608-257-1516 608-257-2537 (TTY) [www.wcasa.org](http://www.wcasa.org)

**Sexual Assault Treatment Center:**  
 414-219-5555 (A crisis counselor is available 24 hours a day. Non-crisis information/referral is available M-F 8:30-5:00)  
<http://www.aurorahealthcare.org/services/sexual-assault/satc.asp>

**Counsel for Creditor's Committee** (of survivors)  
 for information regarding the bankruptcy: 1-888-496-8643

**SNAP** (Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests)  
 Peter J Isely: 414-429-7259  
 John Pilmaier: 414-336-8575  
 Mike Sneesby: 414-915-4374  
[www.snapwisconsin.com](http://www.snapwisconsin.com)

**Archdiocese of Milwaukee:**  
 414-758-2232 [www.archmil.org](http://www.archmil.org)

**Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office:**  
 Sensitive Crimes Division: (if you would like to speak to a member of the law enforcement community concerning a sexual assault)  
 414-278-4617

Your local police department or county office for health and human services.  
 Any other resource that you trust.

**If you would like to contact a priest or survivor whose name appears in this ad call Fr. Jim Connell at 414-940-8054 or John Pilmaier at 414-336-8575**