

An Apology - For The Innocents



We are ordinary people who want to apologize to you, the victims, survivors – the innocents – and to your families and friends for the pain, trauma, isolation and unwarranted guilt you may have carried as a result of sexual or other abuse by Catholic clergy, religious teachers or workers. We acknowledge that such abuse has also occurred in other communities.

We who want to say sorry are of many persuasions. Some of us belong to a church and some now do not; some of us are people of faith and some now are not; some of us believe in a supreme being and some now do not; some of us trained for ministry but did not complete it; some of us were ordained for ministry but now have left; some are still in ministry; some of us express no religious belief and have no religious attachments.

But all of us are deeply scandalized by what has been done to you and your families, be it by individuals or organizational structures. We recognize that in the process your beliefs and faith may have been shattered.

Too often, legal and procedural actions take over and the individual's pain and needs, especially for healing, drift out of view. We acknowledge that these crimes were committed in a religious context, which diminishes the message and the worth of those whose aim it is to love one another and show care.

While we are aware of and encourage established groups working to achieve justice in this area, our focus is directed entirely towards victims becoming survivors through healing.

It is true that our apology is quite different from any which might be offered by those who have hurt you. But we hope that our apology will be at least one part of the healing you seek and are entitled to.

We recognize that many are affected by the consequences of your experiences. While there are some who have never told anyone, often there are family, friends and colleagues who have come to know what has happened. They too may carry a burden of their own pain and guilt as they judge themselves as having failed to act in some way to protect and support you.

We also acknowledge the many good, compassionate priests and ministers, religious and workers in this field. They often feel the wrath and disdain of society, which should really be directed at the offenders. It is unfair that those good people find themselves affected by that and we wish to offer them our support and encouragement. Often they are themselves struggling to assist victims to become survivors through healing.

We want this apology to flow to all those who have been affected. It is an awful and unjust burden you have been forced to bear. We acknowledge your suffering. For this we say sorry.

We invite those who would share this vision of saying sorry to “The Innocents” to join us in our public apology and in its accompanying symbolic act. We hope that such an act of sorrow will take place in each diocese of Australia, indeed the world if that was possible.

Details about how to join the message group can be found at au.groups.yahoo.com/group/fortheinnocents/ and at fortheinnocents.com where this apology can be found. We are also on Facebook.com – search “for the innocents”.

Individual queries to convener Bob Munro forinnocents@yahoo.com.au