

Meeting the Challenge of Clergy Abuse: How the Church and Survivors Can Create New Healing Policies

A SafeNet Proposal

Since 2003, SafeNet has been the quiet force on the ground assisting all sides in the healing process. Some have called us the “Red Cross” of the clergy abuse crisis. Our work with survivors, clergy, laity, health and legal professionals, and even our own offenders, has earned us the respect and trust of many who have been impacted by this tragedy.

SafeNet proposes offering the Church an opportunity to become a partner in the healing process. Caring for those who have suffered is the common ground we share. By signing a declaration of intent (see Appendix A) and creating a sustainable program that promotes physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness, both sides can demonstrate a commitment to the basic principles of health and well being and a willingness to act with compassion towards one another.

We believe the time is now for such an undertaking. All across the world people are looking to Rome and the new pope for real change. It won't be easy for Francis, but we believe he has the wisdom and courage to ask survivors for help to make this change happen. At the core of our proposal is a fundamental desire that's often ignored in any discussion of the clergy abuse crisis: hope. When we offer hope we support life.

1. Create a comprehensive wellness program that covers everyone, anywhere.

Wellness is the loving acceptance of oneself. There is no prerequisite other than a free choice. One can be living a process of wellness, yet be in physical pain, emotionally ill, aged, scared or despairing of life. We propose the Church create bold, new policies that would make available a number of standard and alternative therapeutic services that contribute to the entire healing process. A model for this is the *Wellness Program* of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, which survivors helped implement (see Appendix B). Regardless of a survivor's state of health, a wellness approach is a positive move toward a more just and fulfilling life and a wise, long-term investment by the Church in the good will of all people.

2. Establish a restorative mediation program as an option for conflict resolution.

How can we honor the healing process and cause the least harm and re-injury to a survivor of clergy abuse? How can the Church save millions of dollars and use its financial resources for the common good of all? One answer is restorative justice.

Many survivors have repeatedly expressed a desire to engage the Church in a fair and equal exchange without facing the specter of civil litigation. Legal scholars have urged the use of restorative measures in clergy abuse cases as far back as 2003 (see Appendix C). In 2012 the Archdiocese of San Francisco made restorative mediation a key component of its new clergy abuse policy (see Appendix B). And one diocese, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, has been implementing Marquette University's restorative justice model since 2004 (see Appendix D). The Church can make one of its most important contributions to the healing process by offering restorative mediation as an option in every diocese.

3. Support SafeNet with a significant financial commitment.

No clergy abuse survivor should be forgotten or forsaken. And yet, many are unwilling and/or unable to ask for help directly from the Church. Most seek alternatives to confrontation and all wish to avoid re-victimization. SafeNet has been engaged in reconciliation work from the beginning with its focus squarely on the healing process (see Appendix E). But for SafeNet to continue this work it needs proper and adequate funding. Only the Church can provide that. A respectful and supportive relationship between an organization of clergy abuse survivors and the Church is long overdue. Forming such an affiliation would send a powerful message of hope to the rest of the world.

The success of any endeavor dedicated to health and well being depends on the commitment of both sides to become instruments of peace and to encourage others to do the same. Within every crisis there exists a unique opportunity for the effect of a greater good. We ask the Church to join with us in taking up this challenge and to bind ourselves to each other with compassionate words and deeds.

June 28, 2013

Paul Fericano, Director, SafeNet • Board Member, Instruments of Peace

Susan Blomstad, OSF, Board Member, Instruments of Peace

Olan Horne, Board Member, Instruments of Peace

Alice MacDonald, Board Member, Instruments of Peace

[SafeNet](http://www.mysafenet.org) • PO Box 236 • Millbrae, CA • 94030 • www.mysafenet.org • 650 588-2665