

Abbot Thomas' Comments on Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults

In 2002 the Roman Catholic Church found itself in a crisis dealing with the most innocent of God's people - children and vulnerable adults. This crisis ruptured the trust of the Faithful, continues to bring shame to the Church, and does irreparable damage to the lives of those who have been abused. Although Church leaders have done much to safeguard the most innocent, it will take decades to bring real healing and hope to victims of abuse. Healing only happens when we, as Church, are not afraid to recognize our wrongs, admit we have a problem, are willing to make amends, seek forgiveness and be the 'balm of healing' for those traumatized by our wrong doings.

The sin of abuse destroys precious lives, diminishes the value of the human person and murders the personhood of individuals. It can prevent the victim from living a fulfilling life centered in positive relationships based in trust, love, pride and self-worth.

Jesus himself was victimized by a culture of power that used that power to control. As Jesus understands and empathizes with human suffering, He also offers a freeing from its effects and healing from the wounds it creates. We call upon and approach Jesus, the Divine Physician, so all may be healed, the physically sick and the spiritually ill.

As members of the church, and followers of Jesus, the monks of Glastonbury Abbey have always desired our home to be a safe place for all people: an environment where God is found, prayer is nourished by the beauty of life, and God's creation is celebrated because it renews us and offers us peace, joy and hope. As monastics in the church, we try to be a healing presence by sharing our life of prayer and our experience of the liturgy with all who come to God's house seeking serenity, healing and a deeper relationship with the God of love.

The monastic environs have brought healing to individuals who have experienced hardship, loss, spiritual emptiness, sexual abuse, or suffered the effects of addiction. This healing has resulted in a life filled with new hope, people who no longer live under a burden of fear and shame, who refuse to believe that it was their fault, who discover that they are not alone, who find true freedom from their pasts, and live in peace.

As Church let us continue to learn from our experience and bring about healing, hope, renewal and reconciliation. We must continue to do all we can for survivors of abuse -- ask forgiveness, be reconciled, be transparent, and be a healing presence to those devastated by the atrocity of abuse. The monastic community of Glastonbury Abbey continues our commitment to honesty and transparency. I invite all visitors to our website to join this monastic community in its prayers for all survivors of sexual abuse.