



America is in pain.

**John C. Dorhauer
General Minister and President**

People who have suffered sexual trauma, who have spent significant effort shielding themselves from public shame, and who have sought healing from deep wounds, now find their stories painfully reflected on very public and highly politicized stages. Those who tell their stories, men and women alike, face derision, shame, humiliation, and death threats in order to let the world know what the men in their lives are capable of. Yet repeatedly those who have threatened them, abused them, told them to keep quiet, and dismissed them, remain in positions of power.

Further contributing to the pain of those affected, our elected and other high-profile leaders willingly filter the truth in order to expedite their personal or party-first ends. Political parties push ideological narratives with little to no regard for those affected in the process or for our shared humanity. The message received is that the cost of victims' truth is too high and not one we are willing to pay.

This is the message received by our children, too. It teaches boys that they can get away with a lot more than they might think, and it teaches girls that unmasking a male abuser can come at great personal risk. We watch this message play out on the public stage, and some of our nation's most revered leaders are reinforcing this message again and again.

I learned a long time ago how much courage it takes for a woman to break her silence. I learned as a pastoral counselor how critical it is for a victim's health and recovery that she be heard, trusted, and believed when she breaks her silence. Many women have been threatened by their abusers, and many times the threats come at a cost not only to them but to the people they love. Threats are as real as the trauma of abuse. If, when women find the courage to speak, they are ignored, dismissed, ridiculed, or become targets of public rage, we re-traumatize them and make far less likely they will speak up again.

America is in great pain.

Too many women are living in bodies that have been abused by men with power. Too many men are living in a world where their abuse of power is accepted, excused, and protected.
I believe.

I don't doubt any woman, no matter how long it has taken to tell her story, when she speaks of her abuse and trauma.

I refuse to respect the authority of any man who has used his power to subdue a woman against her will.

I call upon people of faith to find their voices and speak out about the sexual abuse, trauma, and assault that have become far too common.

I call upon people of faith to find their voices and speak up in order to create a world where women who dare to tell their stories and break their silence are cared for, heard, and nurtured, a world where the men who look to us to shame their victims do not get the audience they need to protect them.

I call upon men of faith, men in power, and men in political offices to adopt a position of radical and deep listening to the voices of those who experience our use and abuse of power as a threat.

These are important steps we must take to heal the wounds we have all had a hand in creating. Healing will not happen immediately, but we must begin immediately to act. Anything short of this guarantees the wound will fester and grow.

Be the Church. Believe. Listen. Teach. Heal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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