



The Episcopal Diocese of New York

September 11, 2018

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Through the links at the bottom of this page you will find a document both in English and Spanish from the Diocese of New York's Me Too Taskforce, describing a process of gathering the accounts and stories of sexual abuse or harassment experienced by people in our diocese. In anticipation of our Convention in November we are planning a liturgy for Diocesan Convention which in many ways mirrors a process engaged by the larger Episcopal Church at the General Convention in Austin in July. For those of us who were present at General Convention, the careful, well-planned presentation of personal stories, by both women and men, was a powerful learning of both the depth and breadth of the inappropriate exercise of power and the sexualizing of personal, working and pastoral relationships in the church. All of these stories were protected by anonymity, but several days later a significant number of bishops told the larger group of their own experiences of being victimized by those in authority over them. They were not anonymous, and we know them, and their stories were told in courage and personal risk and an astonishing openness. It was moving and humbling to have unfolded before us the painful histories and memories which our colleagues and friends have had to carry, mostly in silence.

A similar experience took place at the Priests Conference this last spring, when one of the meditations offered by our retreat leader led to a number of our clergy rising to bear witness to the ways in which they have been harmed by the sexual power of others in authority over them. Some described offenses committed against them many years ago, which they have had to carry all these years in a church which had not until now been willing to hear their account. Among those stories came the painful and unvarnished remembrance of the long-time patterns of abuse committed by my predecessor Bishop Paul Moore against priests, seminarians and laypersons in our diocese, not excluding people who were in the room with us at that retreat. It was observed that "there are those too powerful to be held to account," and we were reminded that all of the sins of the world, and all of the ways in which everything and all people exist in systems marked by power differentials, and all of the ways in which people use other people to satisfy their own desires or ambitions, exist in the church as well.

We were reminded that the very structures and processes and culture by which the church offers healthy, life-giving and life-saving pastoral care and guidance to the people of God also create vulnerabilities which facilitate the predations of sexual abusers. And when the abuse of people comes from their pastors or spiritual leaders it necessarily creates enormous confusions for the abused. This was the experience of many at the Priests Conference, where it was shattering, or difficult to comprehend, that Paul Moore, a figure of extraordinary inspiration for so many of us, also bears the epithet "Serial Predator." Paul Moore died fifteen years ago, but for those who

continue to live with the pain of his long-ago abuse, the invitation is here extended to come forward, anonymously or not, quietly or not, to give your account. You will be helped.

That same invitation is extended to anyone in this diocese who lives with the same pain of sexual abuse or harassment to make it known. The attachment from the Me Too Committee gives some information as to how such reports may be made. You may also come to me, directly or through the Canon for Pastoral Care. The season of listening has come. The time when long suppressed voices may speak and be heard has come. And I am grateful to those people, mostly women, but men too — who have broken the silence in our culture. And I am grateful to those who have created the processes here described for bringing into our diocese and our convention the safe place of telling.

May God bring peace to the abused. And may the church bring justice. And may we find in the sharing of stories and the light cast into darkness a renewed commitment in ourselves to create and nurture communities where no one must live in silent pain, and where by the grace of God and the courage of the baptized, the cultures in our church of unjust power and sexual coercion may be overcome. With every good wish, I remain

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "+ Andy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche
Bishop of New York

[EDNY #metoo \(Spanish\)](#)

[EDNY #metoo \(English\)](#)