



SEXUAL ABUSE & FORGIVENESS

FORGIVENESS never implies restoration of privilege to the offender.

Sexual abuse is a traumatic experience that one cannot simply “forget” or “get over”. The memory of the event will always be in the victim’s consciousness. It will never be “ok”. It is forever a wrong done to another human being. So, forgiveness must be understood in this context.

Preconditions for forgiveness by the victim:

- The victim must have experienced sufficient healing from the trauma. Only the victim should determine their readiness when or if to forgive.
- The victim should experience sufficient justice. An example is a concrete expression of the fact that she/he has been wronged, that what occurred should never happen to anyone, and that the offender is responsible.
- Ideally, the offender’s acknowledgement of responsibility and repentance will provide that justice and will free the victim to forgive. However, often times this does not occur and therefore should not be a precondition for healing or forgiveness.
- In many cases, psychotherapy or a support group can provide a safe space where the victim feels heard, understood and accepted. This can also promote a sense of justice and healing.
- The victim must be empowered to forgive through God’s grace.

Forgiveness happens in its own time and cannot be rushed from the outside. It may take one year or thirty years.