

## What Is Clergy Sexual Abuse?

# what?

Clergy sexual abuse occurs when sexual activity of any kind is enacted by a priest (or Deacon), thereby abusing the power and authority of the pastoral role committed to the priest (or Deacon) and violating the rights and dignity of the persons affected by such misconduct.

The fundamental dynamic at the heart of Clergy sexual abuse is that of an abuse of power. The role of Priest, or any religious figure, offers the potential of a relationship of immeasurable value. A person in their care ultimately looks to them for the fulfillment of the deepest expression of self to the divine. Thus, the relationship offers solace where there is pain, hope where there is despair, and fulfillment where there is emptiness. The Priest is looked to either consciously or unconsciously as a person of power.

## Who May Be Victimized By Clergy Sexual Abuse?

# who?

Anyone may potentially be victimized by clergy sexual abuse. This includes not only minors, but also young adults and adults, both male and female.

## Can Clergy Sexual Activity Ever Be Consensual On The Part of the Victim?

# victim?

**NEVER!** The Power Differential in the relationship automatically puts the Priest (or Deacon) in the position of power. Therefore, there can never exist a true mutually consensual agreement. It is the obligation of the priest (or clergy) to hold the sexual boundaries in all relationships.



### OUR MISSION:



**This Ministry calls the Diocese of Oakland to address with integrity the harsh realities of sexual abuse in pastoral settings.**

**Survivors of clergy sexual abuse, lay persons and clergy, work together to;**

**Support and empower survivors in their healing and promote acceptance of survivors**

**Educate to transform attitudes and bring community awareness of the issues surrounding clergy sexual abuse**

**Create, sustain and insure implementation of policies designed to prevent abuse, and to hold abusers accountable**



## Who Are We? who?

The Ministry for Survivors of Clergy Sexual Abuse was established from a dialogue between survivors and church leadership. Out of that dialogue came the realization that for some survivors the Catholic Church must be a willing participant in the healing process. The dynamics of Clergy Sexual Abuse parallel that of sexual molestation in a family setting, which includes the victim (the survivor), the abuser (the priest or member of the clergy) and the mother (in this case "Mother" Church). Inherent in the healing process is the need for "Mother" Church to be accountable, which means to intervene and break the cycle of denial, protect and support those who have been victimized, and confront the abusers residing in its commission.

Our ministry includes survivors of clergy sexual abuse, working together with members of the clergy who are willing to open themselves to the devastating experience of what it means to be sexually abused by a priest or member of the clergy. Together, hand in hand, we work as advocates for victims to bring Support, Empowerment and Hope to lives tragically altered by the debilitating legacy of Clergy sexual abuse.