



The Church must be "compassionate and attentive to those who have been abused and sinned against," the Archbishop writes in this foreword for the Crucible, the journal of Christian social ethics.

Read the full text of the foreword:

This edition of Crucible comes at a crucial time. When I became Archbishop I knew that the whole issue of the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable adults would be an important area to be addressed, but had mistakenly believed that the major changes needed in outlook had already been achieved.

However it very quickly became apparent that this would have to be an area of major concern. Not only were some of the measures already taken only a beginning, the proper response to survivors and the embedding of a proper culture of safeguarding in every part of the Church still had a very long way to go.

In the articles in this edition of Crucible, Josephine Stein's is one that is particularly hard to read, but is vital to absorb. There are instances in the Gospel where people are prevented from reaching Jesus. The most commonly quoted is of course in Mark 10:13 where the disciples 'spoke sternly' to those who were bringing little children to Jesus, and he famously says 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it'.

Jesus' compassion for the innocent child is clear.

In the same chapter of Mark we read of Bartimaeus the blind man calling on to Jesus for mercy and 'Many ordered him to be quiet'.

As you read Josephine Stein's article so it becomes apparent that the culture around how survivors of abuse are heard has in effect been to tell them to be quiet, and to keep them away from the love of Christ. This has happened for a variety of reasons which might start with the inability to believe what is being said about those who abuse. Then there are various legal approaches that have in the past encouraged distance, and even advice that suggested abuse that happened a long time ago was not possible to address. Then there is the sheer bitter frustration that comes from survivors themselves who have had to endure the pain of disclosure and then been ignored. If they are difficult to encounter in that bitterness, then that is absolutely no excuse for not facing what they have to say.

To address that whole culture of silencing in the Church is vital. It is vital because failure to do so is a form of abuse for the second time, as bad if not worse than the first betrayal. So the Stein article goes on to show how damage is done to individuals including causing the loss of faith.

We have to go back to first principles, which is to let Jesus be heard through us. That means being compassionate and attentive to those who have been abused and sinned against. It means being far, far more attentive to their pastoral care and the establishment of ways in which they

can feel safe to tell their story and be listened to.

Yes we have to be rigorous, and responsible in ensuring the Church is a place safe for all, but that is only half the story if we fail to take seriously and to listen to those who have been abused by those who minister in the Church or through Church organisations.

I continue to offer my profound sorrow, and deep apology to survivors for the failures of the Church. I pray that they will be able to help us to change the culture, and that people will take to heart what they read in these pages. We cannot go on telling people to be quiet, or go on keeping them from Jesus.

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