

PROTECT AND HEAL

# Victim Assistance

*The Archdiocese of Seattle is committed to protecting all of God's people and healing those who have been abused by representatives of the Catholic Church.*

We are focused on action – not just actively preventing the crime of abuse – but actively helping victim survivors of sexual abuse seek healing with assistance from the Church, if they so wish.

To ensure we are hearing from victim survivors and appropriately responding to their needs, the Archdiocese of Seattle provides a Victim Assistance Coordinator. Our Coordinator, Cathy Wiswell, has an extensive history of pastoral care having worked in nursing for 20 years prior to becoming a parish administrator in 2012. In 2022, she moved from parish administration to our Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program where she cares for and assists those who have been harmed as they make a formal complaint of abuse and ensures they are offered support for their own healing.

## How it Works

There are several ways people may make a claim. Some may reach out to their pastor, a parish leader or may call the Archdiocese of Seattle directly. However, most claims come in through the Helpline ([1-800-446-7762](tel:1-800-446-7762) | [helpline@seattlearch.org](mailto:helpline@seattlearch.org)). Anyone who has knowledge of sexual abuse or misconduct by a member of the clergy, an employee, or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Seattle is urged to call the archdiocesan helpline.

Regardless of the entry point, the person will be connected to the Victim Assistance Coordinator, who will support the person in making their claim:

- The Victim Assistance Coordinator will speak with the person to understand the claim. It is important to note that the privacy of each person is always paramount.
- Based on this conversation a report is created.
  - If the claim involves an allegation against an individual who is not known to be deceased, it will be reported to the police.
  - The claim report will be shared with the Archdiocesan Review Board, comprised of lay experts, for review. Depending on the circumstances in the report, the Review Board will make recommendations to the Archbishop, which may include:
    - A follow-up investigation, which may or may not include the Vatican depending on the circumstances
    - Disciplinary recommendations
    - Changes to the public list credibly accused clergy and religious brothers and sisters
    - No action if the claim is dropped or determined to be false
  - Based on the recommendations from the Archdiocesan Review Board, the Archbishop will implement the final actions.

## How We Support

We recognize that it takes courage to come forward to make a claim. We aim to create a safe space for people to share their experience and begin their healing process.

Once a person makes a claim, we are committed to helping the victim survivor find healing. This healing process is different for everyone and we strive to find the path that works best for each individual. Victim survivors are offered:

- An in-person meeting with the Archbishop
- Counseling with a professional, selected by the individual and paid for by the Archdiocese of Seattle
- Support from the Victim Assistance Coordinator as needed

## Victim Assistance Coordinator



Thank you for your interest in our Victim Assistance work. My goal is to support anyone who comes forward to share their story, a step that can be challenging. It takes great courage and resolve to step forward, but doing so can be incredibly beneficial for the healing process. I encourage anyone who has a story to share, to please come

forward. We are here to help you heal.

**Cathy Wiswell, Victim Assistance Coordinator Archdiocese of Seattle | Helpline 1-800-446-7762**

## Resources for Victims

- [Maria Goretti Network](#)
- [USCCB Victim Assistance: Victim Assistance | USCCB](#)

## *A Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse*

God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong, always present, always just: You gave your only Son to save us by his blood on the cross. Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace, join to your own suffering the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind, and spirit by those who betrayed the trust placed in them. Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters who have been gravely harmed, and the cries of those who love them. Soothe their restless hearts with hope, steady their shaken spirits with faith. Grant them justice for their cause, enlightened by your truth. Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts, heal your people's wounds and transform brokenness into wholeness. Grant us the courage and wisdom, humility and grace, to act with justice. Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors. Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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