

## **Sexual Abuse and the Church: How Can You Help?**

### **Believe**

Believe the victim. Listen to the victim's story. Do not blame the victim. Sexual abuse is never the victim's fault. Sexual abuse can happen to anyone regardless of age, gender, race or religion. Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by anyone.

### **Act**

Contact your local sexual assault crisis center. All crisis centers are available 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. Information on the closest crisis center can be accessed at [www.icasa.org](http://www.icasa.org). The Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault has 33 rape crisis centers with 26 satellite offices located across the state. Crisis Centers provide free and confidential counseling and court advocacy and prevention education services.

### **Spiritual Concerns**

It is important to recognize that the victim can have a range of feelings after an assault. The victim's spiritual foundation might be shaken or transformed by the trauma. The victim might feel guilt or shame. They may feel they have been abandoned by God. The victim might show anger toward God. This is not unusual.

It is most helpful to assure the victim that the abuse is not punishment by God. Do not tell the victim that the abuse is a test from God. It is important to remind the victim that he/she is not responsible for the assault. The offender is always responsible for sexual abuse or rape.

It is important to support the victim in every phase of the recovery.

### **For Assistance and Information**

For more information on sexual assault contact your local rape crisis center or visit ICASA on the Internet at [www.icasa.org](http://www.icasa.org).