

## Project Synopsis Video

MB: What effect has the Roman Catholic sexual abuse crisis had on the way that Catholics worship God? For Roman Catholics, worshiping God through the Sacraments is the foundation of their faith. These liturgical rituals are supposed to make Catholics feel loved by God in a way that makes them lead lives that are more loving and just. The liturgy is supposed to make Catholics more like Jesus.

KS: However, for decades now, the Roman Catholic Church has been struggling with the sexual abuse crisis. Members of the clergy have committed sexual assault while others have chosen to protect those abusers by systemically covering up their crimes. This gives perpetrators of abuse opportunities to assault more people. In an effort to protect their own authority, many members of the clergy have repeatedly traumatized the lay faithful instead of helping to build community.

MB: In this research project, we examined the ways that this systemic trauma has impacted the Liturgy. If the liturgy is always led by the clergy, how has the sexual abuse crisis affected the way that the traumatized laity experience the Liturgy? Trauma can result in posttraumatic stress disorder, which causes painful flashbacks to reliving the moments of abuse. Rather than being an experience of God's love, these flashbacks can cause the Liturgy to be an experience of abuse.

SO: Additionally, trauma can cause conditions called moral injury and moral distress. Moral injury arises when someone is aware of having been betrayed by leaders they are supposed to be able to trust. Moral distress, on the other hand, comes from the awareness of participating in a harmful situation or system and feeling powerless to change it. These conditions make it difficult, if not impossible, for a priest or bishop to effectively lead a liturgy. Instead of feeling encouraged to love like Jesus loved, the laity can feel betrayal, guilt, and shame.

KS: The result is that many Catholics have chosen to stop going to church, distancing themselves from the Catholic faith. One question our project addresses is: How should the Roman Catholic clergy address this crisis? Given the clergy's role in causing this trauma, how should they respond to the people who are leaving the church?