

## *Support Our Survivors* by Mary Pitcher

One of the survivors I have been most honored to get to know these last five years recently told me that she feels she was on the last leg of a marathon race, and that she was too exhausted to get to the finish line. I'd like to step in to carry her and the other survivors over this finish line. Carry their story, carry their mission, carry their message.

Financial settlements alone are not enough.

Actions are required.

First, remove all priests for whom settlements are paid.

Second, all priest perpetrators must be monitored. Since most were not convicted of crimes, the justice system cannot be held responsible for closely monitoring these men. To be responsible citizens the church must take on this challenge.

Third, the church community must demand a full accounting of the costs of this scandal. The costs include all payouts to survivors, including compensation for therapy, and including those payouts covered by insurance.

This accounting must cover attorney's fees, even those covered by insurance.

This accounting must cover fees for public relations services that have been used during the last few years of this scandal.

Finally, and I think most important, survivors must be listened to. Invite survivors to speak to the congregations. This is the only way to have an informed community, a community that can protect children. Besides being listened to, these brave survivors deserve our gratitude. Because of their loving persistence we as a church community may begin to take the steps toward being a healthy, loving Christian community.