

NAMING THE EVIL

By Diane Moore, Program Director Mary's Hope Workshops

There are those who would say that childhood sexual trauma is a sick action by a sick person. They would be wrong. It is not sick action but evil conduct. Sickness is a condition; evil is a behavior. Evil is always a matter of choice; it is not unconscious; it is a conscious decision to take action. Sickness happens, but evil is inflicted.

When evil comes into our lives, we are changed. Think of yourself and your own responses to the world since September 11, 2001. The actions that day were evil; our lives have been forever changed because of that one day.

When a child's body is violated, that is evil. Just as you knew the touch of evil watching the events at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania, a child's body and soul know the touch of evil. Most children do not experience an isolated event, but a childhood of victimization – of evil actions upon their bodies and spirits.

Those encounters with evil affect the child's very selfhood. The abuser tells the child lies – that the child deserved it, that the child enjoyed it, that the child had no rights. After a time, the child begins to believe those lies and repeats them inside. The child believes his/herself to be sinful, and some children believe themselves to be evil. Equally insidious are the many ways that the child distorts his/her images of the creator in light of these experiences of evil.

Spiritual healing is possible only when the adult survivor begins the process of recognizing and naming the evil and acknowledging the ways that his/her soul was affected. Survivors do not heal in a vacuum but in the company of trained spiritual care providers. Just as each survivor's abuse is unique, the healing process for each is unique and takes as long as it takes.