



Butterflies

Butterflies are fragile, silent creatures. They are easy to miss, their uniquely coloured wings, hidden from view when folded, are vulnerable to injury...

In Mothers' Union '**No more 1 in 3**' display at the Cathedral, butterflies are included. Some are trapped in barbed wire, injured and unable to

escape; others are free. They are small and, amidst the other symbols displayed, they are not easily seen until you look carefully.

Victims of gender-based violence, like butterflies trapped in barbed wire, are injured and unable to fly free or display their true colours.

Victims, like silent butterflies, are rarely noticed or heard, despite being violated. Their hearts are filled with silent cries and prayers.

Also in the display are photographs of four victims of domestic abuse who have been in the news this year: Holly Newton, Hashita Brella, Gisèle Pelicot and Paul Smyth (son of John Smyth). They are only four of the innumerable victims of domestic or gender abuse.

The church is not innocent of turning a blind eye to abuse and a deaf ear to victims. Retrospective shame is a shadow over us all. We need to speak out, shine a light in hidden corners, hear the often-silent cries for help. Safeguarding needs to be taken seriously.

St Paul's says: '*Nothing can separate us from the love of God*', and we may wonder how God can love abusers. Jesus says – '*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*'. Jesus assures us God's mercy and love is even stronger than his righteous anger at abusive behaviour. The abuser may also be a victim and needs to be set free from the grip of a compulsive desire to hurt. We are called to pray for all concerned: for accountability, repentance, forgiveness, reparation and for freedom from fear and trauma.