

## **It's Not Your Sin**

**by Diane Moore, Program Director Mary's Hope Workshops**

In our recent travels to the Northwest, we met a remarkable Episcopal priest named Margo. Many years ago, she was called to minister to a patient in a mental hospital back east. The patient was a middle-aged woman who had recently attempted suicide and the hospital told the priest that she wanted to make a confession.

When Margo met the woman, the woman began with the familiar words of the service of reconciliation. "Bless me, for I have sinned." The patient then went on to ask God's forgiveness for the sexual abuse that she experienced as a child.

When Margo realized that the woman was talking about the abuse that happened to her as a child, she held up her hand and stopped her. She said, in ringing tones, "IT'S NOT YOUR SIN!" Margo proceeded to tell the woman that the sin that happened, the evil that she experienced, was not of her making. She was an innocent child. She had no part in the evil and had committed no sin. The woman released the burden in her soul to Margo and, at the same time, to God.

Too often, part of the legacy of childhood sexual abuse is the survivor trying to own the sin, even trying to own the perpetrators' evil. The gift to that woman was hearing God and the church say in ringing tones, "It's not your sin!" Those are words that all survivors yearn to hear, for their healing begins in understanding that truth.