

Pope Francis Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

Pope Francis,

I am not a childhood clergy sexual abuse victim.

At the age of 24, I was subdued, transported, drugged, threatened with death, placed in bondage and raped by a Roman Catholic priest and his accomplice, an Episcopalian Minister.

The crime took place in Suffolk, Virginia in 1986 during a solo bicycle tour from my parents home in St. Thomas, Ontario to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. My path crossed with the Priest and Minister at a retreat center, Chanco on the James, in Scotland Virginia. Ironically, the bicycle tour was undertaken because I was questioning the strict Roman Catholicism that I was raised in.

I was suicidal after the assault. My relationship with Jesus was destroyed. I survived in a dissociated state for the next 20 years. Interpersonal relationships, especially two failed marriages, depression and low self-esteem have underscored the turmoil that the trauma from the assault wrought.

Once the horrific memories flooded back, I wanted justice, contacting and launching a criminal investigation with the Virginia State Police in the fall of 2011. At the outset the investigator told me that arrest and conviction were only possible if a confession could be achieved, because there was only circumstantial evidence and no physical evidence. The lead investigator had been flown to California twice to garner a confession from one of the perpetrators. This individual is a Roman Catholic priest who until recently was still pastoring a catholic church. He refused to confess. I was recently sickened to learn that this priest had been promoted from his pastoral position at a catholic church to the title of director of vocations and director of seminarians for the diocese. Yes, a perpetrator is now in the selection process of future priests.

A couple years ago I drummed up enough courage to contact legal counsel in the US regarding the possibility of civil action. I was once again thrown into discouragement and depression when I was told that although there is no criminal statute of limitations in Virginia (the state where my assault took place), there is a 2-year statute of limitations on civil action, with the 2-year period commencing from the time of the assault, or in the cases of dissociated memory, 2 years from the time that the memories come back. I was well past the 2-year period of my memories coming back. I was further told that the 2-year statute of limitations was legislated to protect the institution from legal harassment... further insult to emotional injury.

In 2013, I self-published a book regarding the 1986 bicycle tour and my spiritual journey. Writing the book, The Forest Tabernacle, to tell my story, was a major part of my healing. To date I have accomplished considerable healing from my assault. I can truly say that the most horrific trauma of my life is now a source of incredible strength. However, the desire for justice remains. The publisher of my book required that I change the names and locations of my perpetrators as a protection from slander and liable by my perpetrators. It seems that the abuse perpetuates itself. Often the lack of justice transforms into helplessness, hopelessness and depression.

My larger conclusion is that the Roman Catholic Church is an institution with systemic and pervasive abuse at its core. The most sacred part of our existence is our spirituality. Jesus Christ came to us so that we might come to know and commune with our loving Creator. Jesus ministered with all-encompassing, unconditional love. Two millennia later the Roman Catholic Church continues to abuse people spiritually. The spiritual abuse is manifest through the compartmentalization, institutionalization, ritualization and monetization of our spiritual nature, that part of our being which should hold the utmost freedom and respect.

Clergy sexual abuse is a logical consequence in a church that instigates and perpetuates spiritual abuse. The sexual aspect of our existence, procreation, directly relates to our spirituality as we are called to be co-creators with our Creator. My conclusion is that clergy sexual abuse and clergy spiritual abuse are entwined. The abusive patriarchy of the church is not what Jesus intended. Clergy sexual predators and their hierarchy of protectors are the antithesis of Jesus' ministry.

What would justice look like to me? A full and complete confession of all of the parties involved, complete suspension of their title and duty as clergy, investigation and consequence for the church hierarchy that has permitted such individuals to serve for decades, and compensation that I would share with all of the individuals in my life who have been affected by the behaviours that rippled out from me due to the trauma that I experienced.

Pope Francis, what do I call upon you to do? *As Pope I require that you dispense from the rhetoric of repentance and take action.*

All of the priests, Bishops, Archbishops, and Cardinals who you know to have sexually abused or are complicit through the cover-up of the abuse and/or protection of the perpetrators must be terminated immediately and the knowledge therein disseminated to the authorities so that justice might be achieved. If you are in any way complicit in the sexual abuse of children or adults, then you must perform the former and tender your own resignation as Pope.

The church must be cleansed of predators and their protectors. Require that the remaining Roman Catholic Church leaders stop the revictimization of clergy abuse

survivors through the legal system which is inherently adversarial. Grant that restitution to survivors be open, honest, and fair to the survivor.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patrick Milroy
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