

# MEETING SURVIVORS

*Priests and Clergy-Abuse Survivors  
Speaking About  
Healing, Faith and Reconciliation*

Excerpts from The Healing Voices Magazine



Spirit Fire



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Meeting Survivors : Priests and Clergy-Abuse Survivors Speaking about Healing, Faith and Reconciliation, from the editors of *The Healing Voices Magazine*

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## P r e f a c e

*THE HEALING VOICES MAGAZINE* was founded in 2015 when clergy-abuse survivors from around the United States were introduced by Thomas P. Tharayil, Director of the Office of Assistance Ministry in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Since then, *The Healing Voices Magazine* has published over 300 articles online, hosted online survivor discussion groups, introduced peers to peers for spiritual support, and responded to Pope Francis's request for prayer in a virtual prayer service with over 100 attendees from the United States.

In 2019, the survivor editorial team will add to its weekly e-zine even more resources to engage all Catholics in healing and reconciliation, and even more virtual programming managed by Spirit Fire, which publishes the magazine.

*The Healing Voices Magazine* has become a virtual community for clergy-abuse survivors (often otherwise isolated) as well as family members, priests, religious sisters and all Catholics. Contributors include survivors of clergy abuse, family members, priests, deacons, lay ministers, therapists, scholars. Readers are found in almost every diocese of the United States and in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Europe, the Vatican, Oceania, Australia and South Africa.

All are welcome to join the dialogue by reading and sharing articles, submitting articles, referring potential contributors, using our parish-action resources, or attending online events. Spread the hope. Sign up and encourage others to sign up for free weekly articles and/or invitations via email online.

[www.TheHealingVoices.org](http://www.TheHealingVoices.org)

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# W e l c o m e

## **Michael D. Hoffman**

ON BEHALF OF THE FOUNDERS of *The Healing Voices Magazine*, I would like to welcome you to the Chicago area as you begin your retreat. I was so happy when our Holy Father proposed this retreat, and I am so glad each of you are participating. Time together in prayer and reflection, along with God's grace, will help your efforts to heal deep wounds caused by clergy abuse of children and other vulnerable people. It is vital to your on-going ministry to the People of God.

I am one of the original founders of *The Healing Voices Magazine* and, with Teresa Pitt Green, am now one of its two active editors. My name is Mike Hoffman. I am 53 years old. My wife and I have been married for 24 years, and we have two beautiful children. I remain an active Catholic, despite the abuse I endured when I was a little boy. My wife and I are parishioners of St. Mary of the Woods Parish here in Chicago, Illinois. We have raised our children Catholic, and, surprising some, we send them to Catholic schools.

My primary act of recovery was telling my wife my story of childhood sexual abuse. This was in 2006. Initially, I thought she would think differently of me, as her husband, as a provider, as a father to our children. But, of course, she didn't think differently of me. She responded to me with compassion, love and understanding.

Soon after that, since we are active parishioners, I felt I should tell the pastor of our parish, Father Greg Sakowicz. It was difficult to tell him that I was sexually abused by a Catholic priest when I was young. I was concerned he might

think I had a problem with him, or I was questioning his ministry or his character. Again, I was worried a valued relationship would be harmed by the reality of my past abuse. Father Greg listened to me and heard the depth of my sadness. We continued to talk. Our connection was not broken. Because those conversations went so well, soon after, I felt comfortable reaching out to the Archdiocese of Chicago, and I began the Independent Review Board process.

When I shared my story with officials of the Archdiocese, they responded to me with professionalism, decency and compassion. In short, they believed me, and, with that, I was able to begin a therapeutic process of healing. One aspect of that healing process was a meeting with Francis Cardinal George, who apologized to me for the abuse imposed upon me when I was a little boy. Because of the time he spent with me, and because that conversation was so good, I felt comfortable continuing to practice my faith. I am grateful for the many priests who have walked with me on my healing journey.

*The Healing Voices Magazine* can be a wonderful, faith-driven on-line resource for you and your staff members and all clergy to hear the voices of survivors of clergy abuse and to feel our daily anguish and pain. It also amplifies voices of clergy and others in the Church who have found ways to minister pastorally to the difficult process of recovering after abuse.

The articles here are excerpts of some of those in our magazine's archives. They have been chosen for this compilation, similar for those we have prepared for victim assistance coordinators and child protection professionals at the Catholic Leadership Conferences for two years. We offer these as a sign of insight and also hope—that we all can heal together.

I ask you to pray for me and all survivors of childhood sexual abuse, no matter who committed the crime. Please be assured of my prayers for each of you for a successful retreat.

## E v a n g e l i c a l   M o m e n t

### **Teresa Pitt Green**

ALONG WITH MIKE, I WELCOME YOU. I also am a founder of *The Healing Voices Magazine*, and, along with Luis. A. Torres, Jr., I am a founder and director of Spirit Fire, which publishes this magazine. My name is Teresa Pitt Green, and it is my honor to offer you this compilation of excerpts from our magazine with practical ideas and experiences to spotlight the evangelical opportunity before us.

We offer a partnership in healing. Our approach loosely follows principles of restorative justice. The dialogue that has been taking shape in *The Healing Voices Magazine* since 2015 is about creating a safehaven to hear from everyone, survivors, family members, priests, therapists and social workers, child protection professionals, theologians, and more. With prayerful listening and incarnational words, we are speaking Light into the darkness by writing about the Word.

The approach of Spirit Fire, and in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, is to reknit the Church where the wound happened, starting with where evil struck at both the innocence of childhood and the holiness of priests. From there, however, we have all experienced first-hand how waves of wounds rippled outward, hurting families, parishes, vocations, dioceses and the Church. So, our work follows those patterns of wounds, reconnecting with care and healing graces—and helping others to do so as well. There is no room for further betrayal here, neither is there room for a timid or apologetic faith. What is needed is fearless integrity and sensitivity to spiritual trauma. That is why we are working, and you can join us, to set the world anew on fire, on Spirit Fire.

This is the evangelical opportunity before the Church. This is the reality of hope in restoring relationships.

Of many healing prayer services at which I have spoken, one stands out. It was a long drive to a small country church. The only people there were the priest, the victim assistance coordinator and myself. One would think it was a futile errand. But, in the back, behind columns, a shadow shifted. She was unable to hide well and cry. She has since become a powerful witness to the healing graces of our Lord and His sacraments. Don't measure program success in sheer numbers, as you might—and should—measure the significant success of child-protection training. The Lord saves each single lost lamb one by one. This, too, is survivor ministry—with very great gifts to return with wounded healers ready to help reknit the Church.

The evangelical opportunity is very great, because our world is quite tormented. Children and adults are routinely exposed and desensitized to a blurring between sexuality and violence. Sexual predators and traffickers are ubiquitous in social media, seeking prey with few obstacles. A quarter or more of the people you see in the pews during Mass have suffered or are suffering physical or sexual abuse. Many institutions are floundering after similar systemic abuse is exposed, but there is not yet a model for their healing. The very zeitgeist of our time is one of dead-end victimhood and abusive dominance. Here is the evangelical potential buried in the dark struggles you face. You are not alone.

## A NEW ALLIANCE

## Victims and the Church in Partnership

**Msgr. Stephen Rossetti, PhD, DMin**

I REMEMBER OVER TWENTY YEARS ago going to a Chicago meeting of one of the earliest groups of child sexual abuse victims within the Catholic Church. As a Catholic priest, I was made to feel welcome among them. They were just beginning to organize and it was a helpful, hopeful, and mutually beneficial healing time together for them and for me. Since those early days, a great gulf between the institutional Church and the victims' groups has emerged. Often, they are adversaries, if not at times, seeming to be enemies.

However, in the case of the victims of sexual abuse, the Church has often appeared to be unloving, uncaring, and even cruel... The Church herself also needs to heal. The crimes of its ministers wound first the victims and their loved ones, but also wound the wider Church...

Rather than being adversaries on opposing sides of media stories and bargaining tables, what is needed now is a new alliance between victims and the Catholic Church. If they could work together, allies in a common cause of eradicating the evil of the child sexual abuse, I think it could be an important healing grace for victims, and certainly for the Church.

Does this sound impossible? In fact, it has already begun in modest, but important ways.... *The Healing Voices Magazine* itself is an example of

incorporating faith into the life of recovery, and collaborating its ministry with Catholic priests....<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from "Forging a New Alliance Between Victims and the Church," written by Msgr. Stephen J. Rossetti, PhD, DMin and published in *The Healing Voices Magazine* (March 16, 2017).

## Manifold Wound

### **Fr. Bill Stenzel**

SEVERAL YEARS BEFORE I was writing pastoral columns as I do now, I was part of a wonderful faith community. Like all communities, it had ups and downs, but it was well grounded in faith and in its own history. It was the 1970's, and we only expected things to continue to be wonderful. Pentecost words came easy. A new Church was being born!

And then in the 1990's the shadowy tragedy of betrayed trust inflicted a wound that was unfathomable on our youth and our parish and our Church. A teen in the parish confided to a trusted adult that a member of the parish staff had abused him and others his age. The adult came to tell me, and I told the pastor. The report moved upward as slow wheels of bureaucracy began to move, seeming to absorb the report and leaving the parish and us in the dark.

Little did we know, or imagine, there were other victims and two more wounded faith communities! I know now how little anyone knew then about abuse and about how reports of abuse were being handled. If any of us on that parish staff had known what facts are now common knowledge, the abuse would have stopped much sooner than it did—in fact, might never have occurred. This reality weighs on me heavily.

So, my pastoral column on Pentecost 2016... turned its attention to the wounds of the scandal of abuse in our Church as I experienced it in parishes. It helped me to articulate something of my own healing as a Catholic priest and, moreso, helped me express how this wound among us is a manifold wound. The child and youth victims bear very real scars, but also so do their families, their parishes, their ministers—and their priests.

It has taken many years to work through feeling guilty for thinking of

myself as a victim. The atrocities suffered by young people in the Church were so beyond anything that happened to us—priests, ministers and parishioners. But we, too, have been victims of the abusers. We have, too, been victims of some Church leaders. This can be a hard truth for some to see in print, but I learned the manifold wound the hard way, through my own personal experiences after the scandal broke and had its effect on my life.

I experienced the manifold wound when I, alone and privately, wondered about wearing a Roman collar. It was tantamount to doubting the meaning of the gift of my whole life in loving sacrifice. My deepest identity was shaken.

I experienced the manifold wound when, in response to my inquiry about the presence of a young adult in the server's sacristy, a young man explained he was accompanying his young brother, a new altar server, who was vesting for Mass. In that parish, servers had once been abused in the sacristy. The young man, like many others, was protecting a child from whom I might be. The important trust among us had been shaken.

I experienced that manifold wound when I led a parish cleansing its temple on the Sunday after Easter. They had suffered, it turned out, a long history of more than one priest abusing many young people. So, I broke the silence that had surrounded their wounded faith community and began the conversation. Our conversation ended in a parish ritual of healing. We brought our different wounds from the terrible abuse scandal to the Lord on the Sunday after Easter and gathered to cleanse that temple. We washed the walls with holy water as we sang "Holy God." After Mass, the jugs of water blessed during the Easter Vigil were placed at the doors of the church, and as they passed people dipped their hands into the holy water, pressed them against the temple and left sacred hand prints on the porous stone exterior as tears flowed from their eyes. Tears flowed from all our eyes.

There are many experiences of healing that continue in my life as a priest



wounded along with so many others by the scandals. These experiences give me permission to be a recovering victim with my own unique wounds, too, without seeking to deny or overshadow what child and youth victims and their families suffered.

Healing, too, has had manifold sources for me. My healing in recent years has been helped by visits to a former priest who abused children many years ago. Since then, he has become sober of addictions. Burdened now with clarity about the harm he perpetrated then, he has told me that he prays each day for all his victims. He is constantly aware that what he did hurt all of us. I have shared with him what it did to me. And he has listened. He, too, sees the manifold wound his abuse inflicted on many, and his remorse has brought me some peace as a priest.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from “Manifold Wounds,” by Rev. William Stenzel in *The Healing Voices Magazine* September 1, 2016. Fr. Bill Stenzel served in the Archdiocese of Chicago from 1975 until 2016 and continues to write and offer addictions counseling.



# P r a y e r

## Sometimes the Hardest Step

**Rev. Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS**

The relationship between an adult survivor of child sexual abuse and God is fraught with many challenges, not the least among which is prayer. How can adult victims pray to God when God was not there for them while they were being sexually abused as children? How can they hope to grasp the failure of a supposedly good and loving God to intervene when an evil of that nature was being perpetrated upon them as innocent children?

I cannot hope to answer those and other questions in any satisfying manner. Still, I know from personal experience that some adult victims somehow manage — through hard work, grit and grace — to recover a desire to engage in a prayerful relationship with God, but sometimes they are not sure how to go about it. It is for them that I write these words.

It helps to begin with a definition of prayer. I take my lead from St. Francis de Sales. For him, prayer, especially mental prayer, is simply a heart to heart conversation with God. The topic of the conversation can be anything that's on the heart of the one who is praying. I like to suggest that one pray what's on the "front burner" of their life at that moment. Are you still angry with God for not being there for you during the years of abuse? Then tell God you are angry with him. Indeed, be angry with God. The prophets often prayed in such a blunt and candid manor. Such prayer is known as the prayer of expostulation.

And don't think that you<sup>3</sup> have to use pious or scripted words. Use the words that are your words. Prayer of this sort is meant to be a heart to heart conversation, an honest and open exchange of feelings, however strong, and of thoughts, however confused or muddled. God can handle whatever we can throw at him in prayer of this sort. The very fact that you are talking to him is already an act of faith in him, however fragile.

Your feelings may be all over the place and your words a cascading torrent. There is no right or wrong way to carry out this kind of conversation with God. Do you think that he would not see — despite our effort to use pious or sanctioned words— that our heart is not really in those word at all? Honesty and candor, even bluntness, is best here. God knows. God understands. God hears.

Remember, this is a conversation. Therefore, we have to let God speak as well and learn to listen to what he says to us with what St. Francis de Sales describes as “the ears of our heart.” God will speak directly to your heart and to the concrete circumstances of your life at the moment of prayer. Bottom line, there is another with whom you are speaking and who is speaking to you. Such a conversation is a good in itself, an end in itself.

Yet, something truly wonderful also happens over time as a result of prayer of this kind. The one who prays is gradually transformed from within. Anger lessens, grief subsides, confusion lightens, and the heart heals. You may not have words to describe what is happening, but you begin to see yourself as God sees you and as you truly are — as someone who is both loving and loved.

You even begin to grasp that his heart was breaking even as you were being abused and that, far from being absent or indifferent at that time, he was very near to you, present and suffering. Even though Jesus felt that God was absent during

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<sup>3</sup> “You” refers to intended readers of this article, who were survivors and family members.

his agony on the cross (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”), still, in the end, he entrusted himself into God’s care (“Into your hands, I commend my spirit!”).

The innocent one suffering while God seemed to be absent –this experience of Jesus on the Cross is a paradigm for the innocent victims of child sexual abuse. Somehow prayer lays hold of the mystery of it all and is, on some deep but real level, able to make sense, not indeed of the suffering, but of God’s abiding love even in the midst of the suffering.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> First published in *The Healing Voices Magazine* July 8, 2017. Rev. Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS, was elected in July 2019 to be Provincial of the Wilmington/Philadelphia Province of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales. Prior to that, he served at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Vienna, Virginia, and as spiritual director for the survivor ministry there. He also taught dogmatic theology and Salesian spirituality in the Washington DC area before being elected as 10th Superior General of the Oblates and later served as General Formation Coordinator for the Oblates. He was co-presenter with Teresa Pitt Green, and they recreated some of their workshops teaching priests in the workbook entitled *Veronica’s Veil: Spiritual Companionship for Adult Survivors of Child Abuse – Integrating Faith with Recovery, A Christ-Centered Support for Healing from Child Abuse*.



## W h e r e   W a s   G o d ?

### **Fr. Larry Dowling**

In my work over twenty-five years as a priest, with over 20 years in two parishes where I followed a priest-abuser, this is the question that will often be expressed from those abused. “Where was God when this was happening to me?” The question is especially poignant when the abuser is a priest, one supposedly called by God. It is often shared in anger – and rightly so.

I have had to wrestle myself with this question as I work in a community constantly plagued by gun violence and by physical, verbal and sometimes sexual abuse in many households. The constant flow of stories and the deep trauma inflicted by direct abuse and by systemic abuse raise the same question: “Where was God?” and even “Where is God?”

The following reflection is my attempt to understand where God was and where God is. I do this not to help bring people back to the Church or to church, but to perhaps reclaim and bolster a faith that I believe is so important in the healing process, both for those abused and for those who walk with them.

For me understanding where God was is captured in two words from the Gospel of John: “Jesus wept.” (Jn 11:35) It comes from the story of the Raising of Lazarus. It is Jesus’ 7th miracle in this particular Gospel and the story is about loss and participating in resurrection. “Jesus wept.” For so many reasons these two words have taken on greater significance for me as I continue to have the privilege to walk with people as they deal with horrible things that were done to them by other people.

So, my answer to the question of “Where was God?” is this: God gives everyone free will, and God does not intervene directly in human affairs, even when horrible things are happening to others. Sometimes we wish God would, yet

if God did this every time God saw any of us doing anything hurtful to others, we would lose any sense of autonomy and personal freedom.

So, here is what I believe God is doing when horrible things are being done to innocent children, youth and adults: God is weeping. The God I believe in is not an unfeeling God, sitting passively by as things are happening. I can only relate to a God who weeps at the atrocity and sinfulness of our world. I can only relate to a God who longs in those moments that someone would exercise their free will to intervene and stop the madness. But all too often there was no one.

But the story of Jesus going to the tomb of Lazarus does not stop with his weeping. The fact that Jesus wept tells us that Jesus was in tune with two realities: His deep and prayerful relationship with the God he called Abba/Daddy/Mommy, and the relationship he had with Lazarus and his sisters. “Jesus wept.” Does that acknowledgment alone help? Of course not. Which is why the continuation of the story of the Raising of Lazarus is so important for us to reflect upon. Jesus is clearly distraught as he seeks to comfort Lazarus’ sisters, Mary and Martha. Yet he is also distraught because Lazarus has been a dear friend of his. Yes, Jesus weeps. But then he acts, but not alone.

As he approaches the tomb, Jesus engages those gathered, “Roll away the stone!” Then he prays to the Father, asking the Father to help him draw his friend Lazarus from the darkness of death into the light of new life. And Lazarus comes forth. And then again Jesus engages those gathered, “Unbind him!” Remove whatever binds him in death and darkness in order that he may live in light.

The key in all of this is that, despite the horrible things that can happen to others, the presence of Jesus Christ or the Spirit or God (depending on our faith traditions) in us invites us to use our free will to help those who have been harmed, who dwell in the darkness of addiction, past abuse, and other things that have devastated and entombed their spirits.

Those who claim to be disciples of Jesus today need to be ready and willing



at all times to be those whom Jesus seeks to engage to roll away the obstacles that keep those who feel dead inside in order that they may be drawn into the light of healing and new life. We need to be ready when Jesus asks us, to unbind others from their past abuses and trauma, their doubts and fears and despair, and their addictions. We need to be ready to be Jesus' instruments of love and compassion for others to participate in resurrection with victims.

I commend all of those who have used their free will to be instruments of healing to those who have suffered past abuse as a child or youth by a trusted adult. Counselors, teachers, parents, husbands, wives, friends, ministers, victim advocates, child protection staff and others are all stone movers and spirit and soul unbinders who have used their God-given free will to exercise the gifts of compassion, patience, constancy, and unrelenting hope to those who continue the walk of healing from victim to survivor to thriving again in life.

I cannot do this work, this accompaniment, without the gift of tears: tears at what happened many years ago, tears at the reality that individuals have had to carry this burden alone for so long, tears that I know God also sheds with me, yet who, out of those tears, empowers me and others who seek to accompany those individuals who have been victims on their journey to healing.

One final note: If you are one of those people caught up in despair and fear and the harm of past abuse, please realize that there are people, willing human instruments of God, desiring to respond out of our own free will to help in healing and restoration of lives. God may not have been able to intervene then, but God has so touched the lives of other good people who desire to use our free will to assist God in bringing healing into your life.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This essay and the poem, *Metanoia*, on the following pages were first published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, May 12, 2017. Fr. Larry Dowling has served over ten years as pastor at St. Denis Parish on the southwest side of Chicago, after having served as at St. Agatha—each assignment following a pastor removed for abusing children and youth. He served on the Archdiocesan Review Board, the Archdiocesan Healing Garden Committee, and as a

## M e t a n o i a

**Fr. Larry Dowling**

My prayers these days are like shallow waves  
Lighting upon heaven's shore  
Their voice a whispered echo  
Of inner longing's plaintive, restless roar.  
I yearn that my soul once again be moved,  
As a sailboat propelled by that wind  
That brushes across my care-worn face  
Urging the Spirit's revival from within.  
Gulls at midday skim the surface  
Of lake waters, serene and calm  
Searching for the day's sustenance  
As I hunger for a healing balm.  
At dusk I lie on a storm-beaten shore  
Its texture soft and coarse  
Awaiting the day when new life emerges  
And pains of the past lose their force.  
Sun melts slowly into depths of night  
Mind and spirit seek to fathom  
The path on which God will heal and lead me  
To fill my soul's deep, dark chasm.  
My being is drawn to surrender  
To the warmth of the Lord's tender embrace.

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highly respected pastoral counselor for survivors of clergy abuse.

Our hearts conjoin in life-giving passion.  
Spirits commingling in this holy place.  
Reclined at the table of my Beloved's heart  
Fed by life broken open, by passion outpoured  
Betrayals are dismissed, fears wiped away,  
Heart starts to heal, vision's center's restored.  
Darkness fades, soft dawn sun emerges  
Hope's promise breaks at horizon's line  
My being delights in growing strength  
The passion of God has again become mine.



# Abuse, Therapy and Spirituality

## Reconciling the Three

**Rev. Quinn R. Conners, O.Carm., Ph.D.**

The mission statement of Healing Voices is powerful: "...to reconcile our faith with the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual harm done to us." Such a vision is a challenge, and engaging in that process is a lifelong task. One facet of that task is dealing with the impact that the trauma of sexual abuse by clergy has had on the survivor's relationship with God. Trauma of all kinds—but especially of the types that shatter or obstruct the concept of a merciful, just, and loving God and that call into question the goodness and trustworthiness of other humans—have special capacities to interfere with foundational ways we have of understanding ourselves and God. This interference in one's spiritual life can show up in individuals in a couple of different ways.

One of the responses to this trauma can be to simply stop being involved in organized religion. Sometimes that may in fact be necessary at least for a time. Going to Church or celebrating rituals might be a re-traumatizing experience for some. Reading about how some church leadership deals with survivors or clergy abusers can touch off intense anger that survivors' experiences are not treated seriously or that abusers are somehow better cared for. So, distancing from religion and spirituality may be one of the ways to cope with the trauma.

Another response might be more mixed. A survivor might find that spirituality and religion can be a simultaneous source of comfort and stress following traumatic events. On the one hand, religious beliefs and practices may

be comforting by providing sustenance, explanation, and organization following the upheaval of the abuse. Victor Frankl<sup>6</sup> discusses the role of “making meaning” in coping with traumatic events as a source of comfort. He found meaning in acts of kindness among inmates in Auschwitz while he was incarcerated there—being able to witness resistance to his Nazi captors’ attempts to dehumanize the inmates created meaning and purpose for him, supporting Frankl’s will to survive. On the other hand, a person’s foundational beliefs can be shattered by the trauma of sexual abuse, especially if religious language or belief was used to justify or excuse the abusive actions of a religious leader. Such stress is difficult to manage.

When abuse or trauma occurs in the name of God or is carried out by religious leaders, religious beliefs and impact are crucial factors to consider in the healing process. So, it is important to address them in psychotherapy as well as in spiritual direction or spiritual accompaniment. What do you look for in a therapist that helps you to determine how best to use psychotherapy as part of one’s healing process?

Does the therapist respect your faith life and faith-seeking as an important part of your psychological and spiritual person? Laura Brown<sup>7</sup> recognized many factors, including age, gender, culture/phenotype, religious beliefs and faith tradition, ethnicity, disabilities, social class, etc., that affect both the experience of and response to trauma. She proposed using spirituality and religion as factors in coming to understand and treat trauma victims. So, it is valuable to bring these issues to psychotherapy/counseling because addressing these issues can be an important part of the healing process.

In that process, individuals often ask questions such as “What was God thinking?” or “Why did God let this happen?” A culturally competent psychotherapist will refrain from answering those kinds of questions and instead

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<sup>6</sup> Frankl, V. (1968). *Man’s Search for Meaning*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.

<sup>7</sup> Brown, L.S. (2008). *Cultural Competence in Trauma Psychotherapy: Beyond the Flashback*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

empower the trauma survivor to struggle with answering them himself or herself. Often this involves survivors struggling with their own spiritual beliefs in the context of and apart from their religious tradition and determining what makes sense or is meaningful to them. As you might imagine, this is a highly personal process for which there is no right or wrong answer. It is important that your therapist address questions such as these within and as part of the treatment. Responding in this way to spiritual questions involves, hearing them as not about God per se or God alone, but as a faith-informed version of the question: “Why me?”

Sometimes therapists refer survivors who are struggling with their spiritual beliefs to clergy. If those clergy have little or no training in or understanding of trauma, it usually is not very helpful. Being ordained does not necessarily give the person the skills to handle such faith questions in the context of trauma. However, if the situation involves particular points of doctrine or belief or when a clergy member has the capacity and training to offer spiritual counsel or solace or a spiritual ritual or practice that can alleviate the abused client’s distress in an informed and nuanced way, it can be quite helpful in the healing process.

Other therapeutic modalities, like biofeedback, meditation, and relaxation techniques are important to consider and utilize as appropriate in the healing process. However, so is one’s faith life and spirituality. Survivors of abuse are called to wholeness and holiness. The process is multifaceted. The trauma of abuse has a particular impact on a person’s faith life and spirituality. The trauma does not define who one is as a person and as a believing person. But it can ravage one’s experience of God in one’s life and giving time and attention to re-integrating it is an important part of the healing process.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> First published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, November 1, 2016. Rev. Quinn Conners, O.Carm., Ph.D., is prior and co-director of formation at Whitefriars Hall in Washington, DC. He is also part-time faculty at The Catholic University of America. He holds a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from The Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He has done workshops nationally and internationally in the areas of psychology and

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spirituality, sexuality, vocational discernment, and issues in the first five years of ministry.



# Y o u H a v e S e t U s F r e e

**Rev. Kenneth W. Schmidt, MA, LPC, NCC**

THE GOAL OF <my book> *You Have Set Us Free* is to integrate spirituality and psychology when dealing with trauma. These two realms of a human's personhood are profound and have a major influence on how each person understands himself or herself — how they think, how they feel, and how they behave.

The psychoeducational foundation of *You Have Set Us Free* is the Trauma Model, a paradigm for understanding and healing childhood trauma based on the work of Colin Ross, MD. For my part, as the author, I bring my experience as a Catholic priest and Licensed Professional Counselor who has worked directly with childhood trauma survivors for the past 15 years. This model permits approaching the experience of trauma in an informed and flexible manner, including integrating spirituality with psychology.

Trauma is an event or series of events which, combined with an individual's unique vulnerability, creates an obstacle in normal human development. The effects of trauma tend to be more obvious when the abuse or neglect occurred during childhood, but trauma can occur at any age and have lasting effects on anyone.

Many people do not acknowledge the trauma in their history because they are ashamed. They believe that what happened was normal or expectable or what they deserved. Some believe that it was given to them by God, and others interpret it as merely a coincidence. Nevertheless, they are still traumatized because of the impact on their neurological development and because of the interruption or adverse effects on their emotional development.

So, what constitutes trauma? The event or events can be any form of abuse or the result of severe neglect or of negligence. An experience of abandonment, whether real or unintentional, can be traumatic. Medical problems, natural disasters, personal tragedies, being of minority status within a rejecting culture: anything which results in a person not feeling safe or not having some sense of belonging can be traumatic.

However, it is not the event alone that constitutes trauma but the event coupled with the vulnerability of the person who experiences the event. Children in the same family can respond differently to the same situation. One's age can influence how one experiences and interprets the traumatic event, as well as one's temperament. The context or time at which the event occurs can also influence its effects. These are only some factors that can increase or lessen the impact of trauma.

Because variations in factors affecting trauma, people also experience the effects of traumas as a continuum, a range of symptoms and consequences. It can be counterproductive to think of trauma as either/or, seeking a conclusion about an event that "it is" or "it isn't." These are some reasons why, to help someone who struggles with the effects of a traumatic experience, it is not necessary to determine whether some event "fits the definition" of trauma.

*You Have Set Us Free* is intended to introduce core concepts of recovery from trauma in the context of a survivor's practice of prayer and spirituality. It presents 27 episodes which took place during the final week of Jesus' life. Each unit has a selection from the Gospels, a reflection about the experience from Jesus' perspective and how it connects to the life experience of a trauma survivor, and ends with a prayer passage.

The volume is designed for extended prayer (reflection), increasing awareness (illumination), and then practicing new ways to think, feel, and behave (purification), growing ever freer and into a healthier human being who was made

in the image and likeness of God (deification). As Irenaeus tells us, “The glory of God is a human being fully alive.”

Although it is a small volume, *You Have Set Us Free* is not intended to be read in one sitting, but rather it can serve as a prayerful guide to recovery and healing. Some themes may be new or surprising or even upsetting. Readers may experience the contents as jarring, as it may challenge routine (but unhelpful) patterns of thinking or behavior. Alone for personal reflection or in dialogue with others, *You Have Set Us Free* can also be helpful to people living or working with trauma survivors (who may not identify themselves as such).

In closing, a last and most important reminder is this: Healing from trauma is a long process, even for healthy people, and requires patience, gentleness, understanding, and compassion.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> First published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, May 12, 2017. Rev. Kenneth W. Schmidt, MA, LPC, NCC, is pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church in Portage, Michigan. He has a doctorate in canon law, a Master’s degree in counseling psychology, is a Licensed Professional Counselor (Michigan) and a National Certified Counselor. He is a co-founder of the Trauma Recovery Program in the Diocese of Kalamazoo and the non-profit Trauma Recovery Associates.

With hosts Teresa Pitt Green and Luis A. Torres, Jr. of Spirit Fire, he will lead two private retreats for priests who have survived abuse, one in May 2019 and one in July 2019. For more information, contact Spirit Fire (teresa@spiritfire.live) or the bishop hosting the Spirit Fire pilot project, Most Rev. Edward Scharfenberger, Diocese of Albany, New York.



# T r i b u t e t o a P r i e s t

## Fr. Patrick Cecil

### **Michael D. Hoffman**

Father Pat was the pastor of my parish, St. Mary of the Woods in the Archdiocese of Chicago. He supported every possible effort to heal from the wounds of childhood sexual abuse by clergy for myself, as a parishioner and an individual survivor of clergy abuse, and for our Church as a whole. He accompanied me through some very critical steps in my recovery, including trusting me with his own wounds. In remembering his life and his vocation, I share this story with you

Father Pat participated in the annual Prayer Service and Pinwheel Planting event, which is held each year at the Healing Garden of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Our event raises awareness of child abuse prevention efforts which protect all of God's children from any kind of harm. As children and adults sing and pray together, we plant pinwheels in the ground as a public reminder that all children deserve to be safe wherever they go.

At these events, Father Pat was so filled with hope. He would turn to me and enthusiastically ask what else we can do together to make a difference regarding this difficult subject. I was happy he shared his hope, joy and enthusiasm for the annual event and for seeing it as a healing opportunity for our whole Church. These were things we had in common, but our bond stretched back to when I first began the process of reporting abuse.

I had told my story of having been abused by our Catholic priest when I was a little boy, and then I began the Independent Review Board process within the Archdiocese of Chicago. I also began individual counseling.

It was during my therapeutic process that I worked to reconcile myself to the truth of the abuse and the effects it had on me as an adult. One way I chose to do that was to reach out to the current pastor of the parish where I had grown up. It was the parish where much of my abuse occurred. In the spirit of healing and reconciliation, I wrote a letter to Father Michael McGovern, the pastor of Church of St. Mary in Lake Forest, Illinois. He replied immediately by inviting me back to the parish. I accepted his invitation and asked Father Pat if he would go with me. He agreed.

I picked Father Pat up at the rectory, and we drove together. We stopped at a local restaurant near the church for a sandwich prior to the meeting. Father Pat and I were talking casually, but he was struggling with some of his words. He was a bit uncomfortable in the conversation.

Then, there was a moment when he shared with me a deep burden which was weighing on his heart. He told me that one of his good friends, who had been a priest at the time I had been abused, had also abused children. Father Pat felt terrible about what his friend had done and felt badly that he hadn't been able to see the warning signs of an abuser. He went on to tell me his friend was incarcerated as a convicted sexual offender. Father Pat mentioned visiting his friend in prison and that he continued to pray for his rehabilitation. Father Pat was clearly nervous about telling me all of this.

My sense was that Father Pat needed to unburden himself. I listened to him and thanked him for telling me. He had taken a huge risk in telling me, a clergy abuse survivor, yet had felt like anything less honest would be yet another lie to me.

Knowing what I was about to do to heal from the wounds of abuse in my

life, Father Pat shared his heartache about how his friend had harmed children. He shared another side to the wound in my life, in a sense. It took courage to reconcile himself to the truth of what his friend had done, and it took courage to tell me.

There we were, in the lunch shop restaurant, two good people wounded by the same evil of abuse in different ways. We now had spoken the words, shared our heartache with one another, and there we agreed to work to make it better for ourselves and for our Church. Our shared enthusiasm and hope at the Healing Mass and Pinwheel events would spring from this quiet, powerful moment.

We finished our lunch, and together we met Father McGovern. Sitting in the same rectory where much of my abuse occurred over 30 years earlier, I told him Father McGovern story. Father Pat sat next to me. Father McGovern listened to me, thanked me for coming back to my former parish and for sharing my story.

One comment I remember he made was that the sexual abuse of children by clergy cuts close to the heart and soul of every abuse victim as well as of every good and faithful priest. That image remains, as I sat there, in the company of two good and faithful priests. I remain thankful to them for listening to the depth of my sadness.

That was several years ago. As I reflect on our time together in the rectory that day, I hold up my experience as a model of healing, reconciliation and restoration. To reclaim what was lost to the truth of the abuse is a long and painful journey, but I am aware that it starts when we can share our stories of what happened back then with good and faithful people now—in particular with good and faithful priests who understand the extent of the wound.

The one-year anniversary of the death of Father Pat will soon be here, so I wanted to point to his example of courage, compassion and heartfelt effort to support me, a clergy sexual abuse survivor. Father Pat was blessed with a glorious ministry as a Catholic priest, and, among all the service he offered all the people

whom he encountered as a priest, he walked with me on my healing journey. One way he did that which I will never forget is by trusting me with his own terrible heartache. I am blessed that he felt comfortable enough with me to do that.

Supported by him, inspired by him, I share Father Pat's hope, joy and enthusiasm for any and all healing opportunities within our Church.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> First published as "A Tribute to Fr. Patrick Cecil" in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, October 7, 2017.



## And Jesus Wept

### Deacon Phil Franco, PhD

“And Jesus wept.” The verse we just heard in the Gospel, the shortest verse in the entire Bible, is to me, also among the most mysterious. Since I was a little child the verse confused and fascinated me, as I wondered this: Why would Jesus, who is God, who knew that he was about to raise Lazarus from the darkness of death, cry? Why cry when the miracle of bringing Lazarus out of the tomb was about to occur?

I very clearly recall, as a young boy of about the age of ten, asking this very question to the man who would abuse me. His answer was quick and dismissive. “It is just a mystery,” he said.

I tend to disagree.

And Jesus wept. Perhaps the reason our Lord, God himself, wept at this moment, even though he knew that Lazarus was about to return to the light of life, was the fact that the damage was already done.

Perhaps, despite his ability to raise Lazarus, he could not change the human imperfections of sinful choices and the results of misused freedom and sin which is death.

Perhaps it was the very fact that this evil, any evil had occurred.

Perhaps he cried because, despite the miracle he was about to perform, he saw the suffering of those who mourned the loss of their brother. He also saw the relative lack of trust of his followers who continued to pester him, “Why did you

let this happen? Why were you not here to stop this from happening?”

And so, in the knowledge of all this and more, God wept. He wept because despite his ability to bring light –there were still those who prefer the darkness and who choose the darkness and live in darkness. Sometimes, their choices move beyond their own lives and impose the darkness of sin and suffering upon others.

How similar this is to the crisis of sexual abuse that has cast a shadow of sinful darkness over the Church universal at the turn of this 21st century. Let us not equivocate or hold back or try to relativize. This scandal, with all that it has done to hurt the Church we love, stands among the most painful and far reaching in the history of the Church. It is a scandal that inevitably caused many to approach Christ and say, “Where were you? If you were really here, this never would have happened. If you were here, this darkness would never have descended....”

Surely there will be a stench <in seeking to bring healing>. The stench of the dark tomb of abuse, even as Jesus was to work his loving miracle for Lazarus and for us, lingers ever so clearly in the lives of so many, abused by so few. The burial took place, the official mourning was over, but, “Surely, Lord, it’s been four days, there will be a stench.”

But no matter what, no matter where and no matter when: Christ brings light. And we see the light now. We see the light in the Church and the world. Christ has shown up to the town, and people are ready to see him heal. If you are here tonight and for any reason needing healing, Christ is here, and his divine love sees you clearly through his human tears.

There are two ways to help someone carry the Cross. You can do so reluctantly like Simon of Cyrene because you have been publicly challenged, almost shamed, into doing so. Or, you can bear the Cross with love of God and neighbor.

Whatever the motivations of some in power, and I am sure in the beginning

for some the motivations were mixed like Simon, we now see very clearly the good that is being done. We see the light of Christ raising Lazarus through the mist of his divine tears. We see dioceses like Brooklyn working so hard to help the healing. We see the light of Christ working very directly through Bishops and so many good and faithful priests to bring healing and life despite the stench of the aging corpse.

To the families here tonight, we say thank you for your unconditional support. To the priests here tonight, survivors say thank you for being incredible examples of courage and help. To the bishops, survivors say thank you to Brooklyn for being trend setters in this ministry. To the victim-assistance ministry we say not only thank you—but we say you will never know what you personally mean to us and what you have personally done for us. You, by your dedication, have so ably been the voice of Christ bringing life and dispelling the stench of darkness. You have walked us toward the light that we seek.

And most importantly, my friends, who are survivors more than victims, let Christ into your life. If you were abused in any way, you are welcome here tonight. You are loved. Christ weeps for you, but he will also raise you. Come forward. Speak to someone. Let the darkness out and let it be replaced by the light of Christ.

For that journey to begin, you must first begin slowly stumbling out of the lonely tomb. Believe us, we know. It's a dark, slow and uneasy walk. But Let Christ into your life. Like in the Gospel tonight he will, like he did for Lazarus, unbind you and set you free.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The first time this sermon was preached by Deacon Phil Franco it was also broadcast by the Diocese of Brooklyn was on April 26, 2017 from St. Anselm's Church in Brooklyn, New York, during the annual Mass for Healing. By kind permission, this sermon was published in full in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, May 12, 2017. The above is an excerpt from the full transcript. Deacon Phil Franco, PhD, has been an ordained deacon in the Diocese of Brooklyn since 2015 and he is a survivor of clergy abuse.



## T a k i n g   T i m e   t o   H e a l

### **Michael D. Hoffman**

As a clergy abuse survivor, I find my thoughts conflicted as I read the flood of articles from many reputable sources about credible allegations of sexual abuse by Theodore Cardinal McCarrick. Pope Francis removed him from public priestly ministry and, then, most recently, accepted his resignation from the College of Cardinals. I feel unsure about the speed of these actions. It took a lot of courage for the victims to come forward and tell their story so investigations can take place and for the Church at the highest levels to act, but these courageous steps also underscored how no action had taken place for a very long time. Less comforting is how, from my vantage point as a survivor of clergy abuse, I am wary of any actions that could be mistaken for another way to “get over” this problem quickly, to “get it behind us...”

The experience of abuse is still with me. Trying to heal from the abuse drives me to promote child protection in our Church and in our area as President of the Board of Directors of Prevent Child Abuse – Illinois. It affects me daily, even in my choice of words. For example, I do not use the word “touched” in a positive way, as in “touched in a heartfelt way,” to describe the powerful impact someone has had on my life. Even words remain laden with the shudder of abuse.

And, most importantly, most needed now it seems, I can say with certainty that my life and heart and spirit have been powerfully impacted by many good and faithful priests over the years, in stark contrast to my abuser, a very bad man, who was our parish priest many years ago.

So, the speed of Cardinal McCarrick's removal from public ministry and the speed of our Holy Father's acceptance of his resignation from the College of Cardinals still leaves me uneasy. It might tempt people with a dangerous pitfall right now, because it is not a substitute for the real process of healing. Believe me, healing is not fast. It wasn't for me, and it won't be for these priests (or former priests) abused as seminarians, or sisters abused by a bishop.

Being fast to react is important, but it does not automatically help to reclaim the integrity which is lost when we face the truth of Cardinal McCarrick's abuse of children and vulnerable seminarians ... and his betrayal and manipulation of right and good moral relationships.

Trying to get it right in my own head and heart, I remain conflicted. These stories shocked me. They were all too familiar stories of abuse. They were too close to my story. Yet, remaining unsettled, my thoughts turned to my experience at the Mass of Atonement and Hope in 2012 in the Archdiocese of Chicago. In this darkness and deep sadness in our Church, I feel it's a good moment for a survivor of clergy abuse to share a hopeful message from a priest, in fact a Cardinal, that helped me get it right in my own mind.

Francis Cardinal George, OMI, was the Archbishop of Chicago at that time of that Mass in 2012. He was the celebrant of the Liturgy.... I was not then as I am now.... Participating in this Liturgy was one of my first tentative steps into a different relationship with the Church after reporting the abuse. I was sitting in the pew, anxious to be there and also anxious to hear what the Cardinal had to say.

Cardinal George focused his homily on the need for balance and integrity in every human life. Lamentations, he said, expresses the isolation of an individual who is completely at odds with himself and his own self-understanding. The Beatitudes express the mercy and love God shares with the community of believers.

“This stark contrast in the words of holy Scripture reflects the experience of people in their journey of life which takes them and us through good times and bad,” Cardinal George said. “The expression of who they are is a combination of lamentations and beatitudes, of isolation and of life with God. In our own experience, life with God and with one another is always a balance. In good times, we recall the bad times in order to make realistic plans and avoid a sense of hubris, and, in the bad times, we need the help of others to recall the good times to prevent despair, to prevent being caught in a trap, in a box. We need one another to remind us that God is with us, and therefore there is hope.”

Cardinal George continued his reflection, noting how victims of clerical sexual abuse, often years or decades after the abuse occurred, talk as though they have put that experience in a box and closed it off from the rest of their lives. But, to stop the abuse being able to cause further damage in their adult lives now, they must open that box and integrate the contents to heal. He seemed to understand our struggle as survivors as few priests did at that time. He continued.

“Priests who have abused children or young people also put that part of their lives in a box. It seems to have little to do with the rest of their life, which often includes many good and generous acts. But, without opening that box and acknowledging what they’ve done, they cannot overcome it,” he added. “They cannot stop the harm.”

As I sat in the pew, I was convinced I was hearing a heartfelt and necessary statement. It was shocking, especially coming from a Cardinal, Prince of our Church. And it was wise, because this Cardinal knew that alone and, together, we are charged with seeing and believing, working through to the truth so we are free.

Back in 2012, Cardinal George’s comments helped me to reconcile myself to the truth of the abuse imposed upon me when I was a little boy and how that affects me today. Coming to terms with my own story, opening my own box, so

to speak, helped me reclaim what was lost within my family relationships so I may once again be “in balance” and live a rich and fulfilling life....

Cardinal George’s perspective and his message also motivated me to help others heal. Since then, I have become dedicated to promoting child protection, but also am a co-founder of *The Healing Voices Magazine*, chair of subsequent archdiocesan Masses for Healing and Hope – and a participant in a group of survivors, priests and others who helped plan and build a Healing Garden for abuse survivors and their families in the middle of downtown Chicago.

That’s why I write this today. I feel what Cardinal George said then has bearing now, in these dark times, as all Catholics reflect on the Cardinal McCarrick story....<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Excerpted from “Reclaiming Integrity Lost to Abuse” by Michael D. Hoffman, introduction by Teresa Pitt Green, first published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, August 6, 2018.



## Light in Darkness

**Kathy O'Connell**

LIVING WITH CLERGY ABUSE has been a challenge for me, as I'm sure it's been for other victim survivors. The Pennsylvania grand jury report that was recently released has set our media and Catholics on fire making, but that has actually made it even more difficult to be a survivor of such abuse.

The news continues to reopen wounds. These are wounds many of us spend all days, months, even years trying to heal. These are wounds that are painful and heart wrenching. Years later they still make us wince. These wounds can feel like they will never heal, especially with constant reminders in our society today.

Recently, as I attended Mass as I usually do, I found myself weeping as the priest washed away his iniquities and his sin. Yes, this phrase has forever been part of Mass. "Wash away my iniquities and sin," as the priest gently wash his hands before consecrating the Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

It surely has meaning. However, did it have meaning to those priests who abused a young child? Did it have meaning to the priest who abused me? Even now, Mass can bring me to tears. They are tears of sadness, tears of doubt, tears of wondering. Wondering what it was like for one of those abusive priests who walked to the pulpit, preached about God's love, continued to remind us to follow in God's footsteps with kindness, empathy and compassion. Then washed wash his hands of his sins. Returning after Mass to his sins. Yet, it happened. In my life. In lives of many victims.

Of course, for all of us, it's difficult to comprehend. This evildoing was just

staggering in how bold it was. How shameless.

As I attend Mass and listen to those words, I remind myself that they are, now, words from good, pastoral, faithful priests. Things have changed in the Church – not nearly enough, but enough for Mass to be safe for me. Abuse. Yes, it happened to me, to many. Our parish churches have changed. The U.S. Church has become aware of the abuse of children and started over with new approaches — new requirements, new information, new training. They have turned a great deal of attention to protecting our innocent children today from clergy abuse.

These changes are important. They are not enough, however. We need to get past the old to focus on the new. We need to bring our past Church and leaders into healing and forgiveness. We need to empathize with our many victim-survivors and open our hearts and ears to share their stories of abuse with the press, the Church, the people of God so they, we, can bring healing, love and compassion through our pain to everyone who hears us...<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Excerpt from an article of the same title first published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, September 17, 2018. Kathy O'Connell is one of the original founders of the magazine and remains a regular contributor. She is a wife, mother and grandmother who currently resides in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

# Do's and Don'ts

## A Checklist for Effective Pastoral Care<sup>14</sup>

Speaking with someone who is traumatized? Who has been abused? Who is suffering abuse by one degree of separation, that is, loves someone who has been abused?

Don't talk.

**Listen.**

Don't be impatient.

**Remember healing is on God's timing.**

Don't know.

**Learn.**

Don't be directive.

**Follow our lead. Help us follow God.**

Don't defend.

**Acknowledge guilt of abusers and enablers.**

Don't be linear.

**Appreciate healing as circular, repetitive.**

Don't minimize.

**Recognize the burden.**

Don't wing it.

**Prepare and be knowledgeable. Have a plan for crises.**

Don't intellectualize.

**Welcome strong feelings without engaging them.**

Don't be goal-oriented.

**Be God-oriented. His Presence is enough.**

Don't launch a pep talk.

**Know if it were possible, we'd be over it already.**

Don't judge or shame.

**Offer radical respect for a humiliated person.**

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<sup>14</sup> Source: Teresa Pitt Green Copyright © 2012 All Rights Reserved. A formatted and printer-friendly version of this checklist is available for free in the publications section of SpiritFire.Live.

Don't talk to a diagnosis.

**Talk to us about the diagnosis.**

Don't own our crosses.

**Respect boundaries on our feelings and story.**

Don't try to fix it.

**Encourage. Empower.**

Don't fuel a focus on past.

**Care for need here, now.**

Don't push.

**Accept healing as a process.**

Don't expect efficiency.

**Simplify, repeat, repeat, confirm, repeat.**

Don't expect reliability.

**Expect no-shows, late arrivals.**

Don't personalize.

**Depersonalize anger and reactions.**

Don't assume responsibility.

**Set firm boundaries, softly.**

Don't analyze.

**Affirm mystery and grace in this life.**

Don't shift into therapy.

**Know how to refer for professional help.**

Don't be manipulated.

**Live the boundaries you set.**

Don't feel responsible.

**Let the Holy Spirit do the heavy lifting.**

Don't expect efficiency.

**Simplify. Repeat. Repeat. Confirm.**

**Repeat. Be patient.**

# W h e n S a i n t s H u r t

## Checking First Impulses to Help

**Teresa Pitt Green**

Spiritual wounds are quite different <from physical wounds and illnesses>. They are more sensitive and easily re-wounded, but they, too, receive a similar plethora of well-meaning advice. One example is how kind-hearted Catholics don't check the impulse to be helpful they might offer any other Catholic. As a result, they may offer damaging, indeed dangerous, references to a particular circle of saints when they try to inspire adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

For Catholics at ease in their faith, the idea of turning to saints for intercession is second nature. And, indeed, saints have a powerful role to play in the life of anyone who turns to them. Survivors of abuse, including clergy abuse, who are Catholic do rely on saints for guidance and intercession. Yet, unlike survivors of abuse by authorities other than those representing the Church, the traditions and sacramentals, the theology and the setting of our Church, can trigger spiritual wounds—often quite terribly during different seasons of healing. It's understandable how, to fellow Catholics, there could be a reason to postpone sharing any aspect of Catholicism or even words about Christ with someone in pain. Yet there is such a reason—it is part of why abuse within the Church is particularly heinous. Nevertheless, for survivors contending with the aftereffects of how faith was perverted by abusers, it is important to consider how to care pastorally without re-wounding a tender soul.

Consider what popped up first on Google today when I searched “saints

and abuse.” A well-intentioned post by Theresa Williams entitled “11 Saints Who Endured Sexual Abuse” (October 18, 2017) was published in a leading Catholic blog, Epic Pew, as a response to the #MeToo phenomenon. The list seems intended for abuse victims, so they might find a saint with whom to identify and on whom to rely. Numerous similar posts and articles appear from around the same time with the same purpose, bringing all or most of the same saints to a suffering world.

Of the eleven saints listed in this article, nine had chosen to be murdered rather than raped. A tenth had chosen death but escaped with a broken back. The last saint was not an abuse victim. The most obvious message, however inadvertent, was that holiness for abuse survivors looks like not being alive now. (This tally might not even occur to someone who has not been abused, but every survivor of clergy abuse to whom I showed it to double-check my own reaction, without preparation, had the same reaction as I did: What did we do wrong?)

On the matter of rejecting abuse, the fact is that survivors often are burdened, later in life, with second-guessing what we might have done differently to avoid abuse, or the abusers. We are burdened by a sense of shame or defilement. It is a cornerstone in the wound of abuse. Sexual predators groom victims, convincing each that he or she deserves the abuse and shares in the shame. That judgment of victim by abuser has particular force when the abuser has the moral authority of a priest. (To be “healed” can mean many different things in this regard; a few are released of this burden entirely, most manage it with self-knowledge and interior psychological disciplines.)

Survivors heal, with the help of a skilled mental health professional, by unlearning these lies and accepting the innocence and dependence of child victims. The idea that death is better than defilement runs counter to this therapeutic process. It can make the mere act of surviving seem unsaintly – a lesser outcome. That’s how such a list, thrown into cyberspace as it is, can work counter to the evangelical intent of the writer, potentially re-wounding a survivor

and even pushing him or her away from Christ and the saints.

The danger goes deeper. Consider how some survivors of abuse suffer residual and chronic mental illnesses. They may face recurring, even daily, temptations for self-harm or self-murder. Other survivors experience the same during acute stages of recovery. Introducing this hagiography into the struggle is counterproductive. It can be permission-giving, a rationale for self-harm or suicide.

Catholics who do not share the experience of abuse might find this hard to imagine. They are right to point out that saints offer graces and everyone struggles to forgive. This is true.... Indeed, the Maria Goretti Network ([mgoretti.org](http://mgoretti.org)), co-founded by Miguel Prats who is a Catholic clergy-abuse survivor, manages to focus on the goal of forgiveness without re-wounding survivors. For one thing, survivors join the Maria Goretti meetings when they are able. This is quite different from someone handing them an article or book for inspiration and stepping away, leaving the survivor unknowingly vulnerable. The Maria Goretti Network is about peer support, meaning peers walk together through reactions to the stories of saints like St. Maria Goretti. No one is left alone with negative internal voices that can quickly use the martyrdom of saints as proof of personal unworthiness or damnation....

In time, survivors can find that forgiveness offers relief for spiritual wounds, but we also have to sort through how forgiveness has also been the cause for some survivors' need to forgive. We are the renowned statistics. As faceless children or teens, we paid the bitter price when long ago bishops forgave predator priests and, doing so, enabled repeat offenses. Many of us might have been spared the hell of abuse if only forgiveness had not been repeatedly granted in good faith to one who was perverting it, and grooming leaders, to ensure continued access to victims. Forgiveness was never meant to enable such evil. For survivors of abuse within the context of faith, the veneration of saints who forgive abusers who kill them can be very complicated. Discussion either re-wounds or grounds healing.

Be sensitive to the underlying issues and how to talk about them.

This is not to say that saints who were abused have no part to play in our faith stories. (The truth is quite the opposite.) However, this is to urge Christian ministries to become trauma-informed (that is, sensitized to the trigger points for survivors of different kinds of trauma and abuse) before they try to help. Why? Because no one would think of walking into an ICU urging the suffering patient then and there to forgive the drunk driver who caused the accident. No one would think of suggesting that same patient ought to have chosen to perish with the other passengers. Most people would call the patient's survival a miracle.

But, when it comes to survivors of abuse, in particular abuse by clergy, a sense of decorum is missing. Catholics are more like the friends, colleagues and strangers making small talk of personal prescriptions following my first brain surgery. My physical recovery wasn't harmed by their hogwash, but it might have been had I given it credence. Many faceless readers, who have yet to secure a working relationship with the faith through other recovered survivors or able ministers, can suffer re-wounding if they are left to read this article and suddenly face the burden of unreasonable guilt in the isolation of their own homes.

In the end, this is an argument for trauma-informed ministry. Most candidly put: Don't imagine you can counsel survivors of abuse or trauma when you're flying by the seat of your pants. It's very easy to do damage when you set out to evangelize in a world where sexual abuse and aggression permeates some social networks and finds its way into the pews in the form of silent but broken hearts.

For a start, take time to learn, reflect, pray and even imagine what it's like to remain within a faith that has hurt as deeply as the Church has some survivors. There is much wisdom in that practice—because, doing so, you'll see how the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord are even more relevant than most people realize to survivors of clergy abuse.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This is an excerpt of a pair of larger articles offering cautionary reflections on a common gesture of goodwill pointing clergy-abuse survivors to saints, including a critique of Theresa Williams's "11 Saints



# M a k i n g   D i s t i n c t i o n s

## Sorting Lies from The Truth

**Teresa Pitt Green**

During early counseling for childhood experiences of sexual abuse, there were tough truths. One was that my mood was suddenly crashing—and my mental clarity suddenly blurring—simply because a single image could trigger an overwhelming emotional memory. My therapist suggested a phrase to reverse the trigger: “This time is not that time.” The practice proved astoundingly helpful, drawing me out of the past like a lifeline, but I was still angry. I had run from the past madly, believing I could be free, but I had not managed to escape after all.

Reaffirming this distinction between past and present continues to help me function. I’d characterize my own journey over thirty years as “Healing comes from making distinctions.” I repeat this line regularly to other survivors of child sexual abuse. It is cornerstone in my book, *Restoring Sanctuary*, from which this essay is somewhat drawn.

Making distinctions has helped resolve terribly painful questions. For years, I believed I had caused predators to lose control. I confused my own self with the culprit. That falsehood was an impasse to healing. A bright line of distinction had to be drawn between an adult’s force and a child’s dependence. It was crucial to define a distinction between loving and grooming. I was capable of the former, my abusers expert at the latter.

All survivors of abuse grapple with shattered relationships. Because my abusers were Roman Catholic priests, my trust in the Church was broken too. Catholic religious and laity alike publicly seemed to agree victims should “just

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Who Endured Sexual Abuse (Epic Pew, October 18, 2017) and Dawn Eden’s *My Peace I Give You: Healing Sexual Abuse with the Saints* published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, May 10, 2018.

get over it,” as if any of us can heal by our own power without God’s graces or on any timing but God’s. They seemed to have blurred the distinction between forgiving and enabling, between predator and priest. I did not trust them.

Yet, when my focus returned to my own recovery, I faced the distinction between forgiveness and surrender. Forgiveness was impossible, surrender a little less impossible. I had all the psychic resistance of any human to surrendering to a power greater than myself. My real problem was that I had entirely reasonable, additional cause to object. What I had learned about surrender already abusers had taught me early. Surrender was terrifying, painful, confusing. It created shame. It was annihilation. Looking back, it was not just like death. Parts of me really had died. It was reasonable not to repeat this.

So, another distinction was needed. This one was between gift and work. This was a tough truth about God’s peace. I felt like I had earned my fragile peace. Its price was grief. It had been paid through years of arduous recovery work. Now I was entitled but getting nothing. It turns out that I was sorely mistaken. God’s peace is never earned. It is a gift. Until I stopped reaching and opened my hand to receive, I remained at odds with the comfort I needed. The more I could imagine a gift and not a commodity, the more I started to notice one incredible gift in my faith recovery—moments of spontaneous joy I had not even known as a child.

Now I see more clearly how, back then, God was un-teaching me. I had to learn it was a false truth peddled by predator priests who trafficked in deception. The lesson was confounding. Yet, it alone would free me to receive simple, life-giving Truth. Surrender to God proved to be not just an abstract concept but a very real, concrete state of recovered human psychology.

Making distinctions has inspired something else quite unexpectedly. I have grown to appreciate the agony of priests who are confused for predators, or doubted as predators, or mocked publicly as predators. Their burden has become clear, yet still distinct from mine.

Forgiveness, for me, crept in, after surrender. Because every day requires

many returns to God and surrenders to His love, I still forgive every day. Forgiveness was not closure for me. It was an opening—to ongoing surrender. This is what God returned in exchange for my broken heart, a forgiving willingness. This great thing has been accomplished not by my own power or will, but through His patient graces. He has been far more patient with and attentive to me than the Church, but that is also beginning to change. It's a change I choose to support.

Making distinctions, it turns out, creates opportunities to choose. The Creator of my psychology understood this, as I discovered in Deuteronomy 30:15. God says “I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil.” Then, for a few verses God describes how choosing one brings destruction and estrangement, and choosing the other brings, well, life.

Some translations of these verses are pretty doomsday. Regardless, what I read was a call to proclaim my identity. I could now choose against the evil in my childhood and its lasting effects. I could now choose whatever slim goodness could be found in the moment instead of the many, many kinds of death available to dull psychic pain. The choice is tough. Its terms are formidable. From what I can see, it is never made definitively.

Free choice frees me to recapture something more from childhood. True choice was denied me by predator priests. Now, each time I choose, God has defined the options. These options are not deceptions. If I follow His guidance, I surrender God as the Author of my life. That familiar haunting depression, the doubt about how to live, those toxic temptations of shame—victory in these and many struggles had long eluded me. Now, they fall subject to moment-by-moment decisions between life and death, light and darkness.

With a God-based paradigm, I still make mistakes. I expect always to struggle with lasting effects of child abuse. Love continues to be fraught with reasonable doubt. But everything is made possible by integrating faith with recovery.

In retrospect, making distinctions has been a process of untangling my psyche from the snare of lies a predator creates. It helped open my heart and mind and life. I emerged from that psychological cringe we survivors know too well, where we retreated long ago as the perversion of words like caring, forgiveness and surrender was the only option we had.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Originally published in the survivor newsletter created and distributed in Archdiocese of Chicago, 2011.

# Spotlight

## Healing Voices Round Table

CLERGY-ABUSE SURVIVORS shared thoughts on the movie *Spotlight* shortly after it was released in one of *The Healing Voices Magazine's* Round Tables, a format of article that works like a panel. A group of survivors comment on a single topic. Reader response to this Round Table was one of surprise at an unexpected range of reactions.

### **Sooz**

*Spotlight, The Hunting Ground, Lady Gaga's* emotional performance of *Til It Happens to You*: I wondered why I stayed up to watch a show I usually don't watch. The truth is I haven't seen either movie (feel I need to watch them alone); however, I understood the context, abuse, was a common thread among all three. The night was overshadowed with awards for sound editing, costume design, special effects, but finally the big winners were not about entertainment. They were about educating people about what is an enormous issue, a silenced issue, in our society. They were about trauma and abuse hushed up from the powers that be.

At first, I applauded each individually: Gaga's authentic personal message for herself and for others; *Spotlight's* best picture; and the acceptance speeches from those involved. For how many years have we who have been abused have tried to speak? Personally, for me, since 2003, and I am still trying to be heard by those who choose not to listen. Then, the Academy Awards show was over. As I sat with what I just witnessed, I started to make connections, so many connections. The reporters, while they were trying to report the news, "the truth," were experiencing the same response that as we the victims were: "I don't want to hear

about this, those are dangerous allegations, go away. If I ignore you long enough, you will disappear and eventually fade away, you become invisible and mute.”

After those connections surfaced, I felt the parallels creep in, such as the college students who suffer from abuse at powerful universities. There they stood on stage with Lady Gaga, words written on arms because their voices had been silenced. Silenced by what? The powers that be, those in charge, those concerned about their reputation and their money!

As Lady Gaga speaks, sings “til it happens to you, you don’t know,” *Spotlight* has effectively made known to those abused by anyone that it is imperative for all *to speak up, keep speaking* until you are heard. *You will cause change*. Our society, all environments, all over the world, need to change in our attitudes, our actions and our fundamental beliefs about the dignity and sacredness of every human being.

### **Mike**

My wife asked if I would see the movie with her. I said “no.” I felt it would be too much for me. Once the movie could be rented, she invited a dear friend of ours (who knows my story) over to watch the movie at our house on a Sunday afternoon. I stayed away. I ran errands, and I went to my office to do some work. When it was over, Kathy sent me a text, and I returned home. I walked into the kitchen and could see my wife and our friend had been crying. They looked at me and I began to cry. The three of us stood, crying in our kitchen, unable to speak. After a few moments, our friend said that she was so sorry those bad things happened to me, and she left. My wife and I dried our tears, and we talked about the movie. I am happy the movie won the Oscar, but I am glad I didn’t see it.

### **Kathy**

When I heard the movie *Spotlight* came out in theaters, my heart filled with anxiety. Knowing I didn’t want to see it, I let my curiosity take over and I went

alone. I think I was hoping to find some answers I needed about my own abuse, but instead I was overwhelmed with feelings of sadness, fear, and shame, and seeing it felt like a mistake. As the tears flowed throughout the movie, many memories resurfaced. I knew it was time to be courageous and speak of my pain. Yes, it did open up old wounds for me and for many others who have suffered alone living with painful scars. I'm hoping through my pain that healing and reconciliation will be my reward. I am happy that *Spotlight* won the Oscar. I also hope that it helps others to reveal their secret that has long been buried.

### **Tim**

I was alone when I watched *Spotlight* and this is exactly how I wanted it. I was alone in the beginning of going through the struggles of the abuse that had happened to me, so why not watch the movie this way? I still remember hearing about the Boston abuse scandal after I had been abused, which is what really pushed me to come forward shortly after. The movie itself reminded me of how the priest who abused me was ushered from one place to the other. Why protect someone who can hurt more individuals? I never understood that, and the movie just makes it very clear why they did this. The emotions were strong but the courage of everyone who helped expose this scandal made me feel I wasn't alone. This is why I love the *Healing Voices*: I am not alone.

### **Teresa**

I didn't watch the movie *Spotlight*. That was my conscious choice. Don't misunderstand: I am a fan. I am grateful to the writers, producers, and especially tenacious news people who originally dogged after our buried existence, as victims.... While having purchased a ticket on principle, I still don't intend to watch *Spotlight* for two reasons.

First, I have lived it. Why reread a story when it's already branded on your psyche and inescapably so? Second, my particular approach to recovery, which

has evolved over decades, places top priority on regaining the power of choice in my life. Along with many survivors, my well-being required wrestling power back even as an adult from the shadowy memory of abusers who destroyed my freedom during a trusting and innocent time. So, now, I choose not to be emotionally rattled. I choose to care for my tender self and my resilience by not striking at the wound with which I am involuntarily far, far too familiar. Instead, I seek what fuels the light within me. This is how being a survivor has driven me ever closer to the Light.

Seeking Light, standing in Light, I am glad *Spotlight* provides another opportunity to say, in my own way, “enough” to the wounds of abusers and their enablers.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Excerpt from “Round Table: Spotlight, the Movie” first published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, March 1, 2016.



# P a r i a h

## How Survivors Can Feel

**Sooz Jeson**

We, victim-survivors, can be mistaken for the face of an evil which was perpetrated not by us but by some whose responsibility was to teach us about God and what it means to live a holy life. We can also be mistaken for the face of a second evil-sin, the sin of others who closed their eyes and ears to the truth when they had a chance to stop the evil.

This evil did not have a mind of its own, in my view; we cannot in justice ignorantly blame the devil. That makes it too easy to ignore how this evil was thought about, whispered about. Was it prayed about?

What if those who knew and ignored the evil had turned to God in prayer? God's reply surely would not have agreed with rationalizations they used to ignore us. Did they pray before the crucifix? His eyes saw what was in their hearts. Jesus and his Father were not blind to what we suffered.

We know Jesus died and suffered on the Cross for all our sins, even for the sins committed by His own *Chosen People*. That must have been very difficult for Him to do. It must be hard for Him now, too. He suffers with us still the pain from abusers and those who knew the truth and protected the abusers. Their betrayal of us is like the kiss from Judas to Jesus. Their denial seems like the denial of Peter, over and over.

So why would anyone look away from us as if we are the face of abusers or their enablers, when we reflect the wounds of Jesus. Do you look away from our scars? Do you deny them? After Jesus' crucifixion, one of his followers could not see His scars. He questioned if they even existed. Do you?

Survivors of abuse feel our wounds in the wounds of Jesus every day. We

don't get to deny what we feel. There are lay people and ordained faithfully serving the Church who do not look away. They truly see, know and understand. In a recent *Healing Voices* article, Msgr. Stephen J. Rossetti declared, "The wound of child abuse in the church continues today to fester and at times bleeds profusely." I find that wording very powerful, because so few see how this wound still needs care.

This wound for some survivors, like myself, feels like it has devoured our existence on this earth, not just our sense of worthiness in our Church. Many of us have struggled with how abuse and its coverup conveyed to us that we, not the abusers, were the sinners. It created the public confusion making us seem like the face of the scandal, when we are not.

What is important for me is Jesus did not abandon His betrayers even during His crucifixion. This is a real challenge for victims or survivors of clergy abuse. This is a challenge for me. This is the courage we struggle to have in faith. It is a kind of wound that can heal.

As my healing has continued, I have come to see that survivors are not the face of the scandal and did not deserve what happened to us. I have come to believe that we can be Wounded Healers as Jesus showed us from the Cross.

Many of survivors remained practicing and involved Catholics. Some found a path to healing, while others still are searching for a road to spiritual healing as they sit in the pews next to you. Others are praying for the courage to be drawn back. We who have walked that path are waiting to help them, but we hope other Catholics can come to see there is a place for all survivors of abuse in the Church, despite its abuse of them. We hope others help us welcome other survivors home. And, we remain ready to offer our wounds to help others heal and draw ever closer to God.

It's hard to do. When I feel like I am bleeding profusely with the wound that I share with Jesus and that also bleeds in His Church, it helps me to recall John 15:5: "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me you can*

*do anything.*” I remember Jesus is nourishing me and helping even my suffering bear much fruit. I remember Jesus is helping the Church, too.

From the sin of others who crushed some of us, faith has been spouting and blooming for us as well. As a Wounded Healer, I am along with other survivors drawn to bring others to this life-giving vine, with God nourishing us and giving us new life. Other victims still feel buried. I believe survivors who serve can be the *kenosis* (emptying of self-will to surrender to God’s will) that transforms the sin of our Church into a sacrifice to offer freedom to other survivors and to our Church.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This is an excerpt from “Holy Week Wonder,” by Sooz Jeson, first published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, May 12, 2017. Sooz Jeson is an original founder of *The Healing Voices Magazine*, teacher, mother and prayer-poetess. She has developed a workshop for survivors which is in a beta testing phase.



## Finding Closure

**By Bridget McGill**

First and foremost I need to tell you I consider myself a “thriver.” It has been a long lonely journey to become that. I was afraid of public restrooms for as long as I could remember. I made sure my three children were accompanied by me or my husband when they used one. He thought I was overly protective. I was 40 years old when I remembered my assault. I was sitting at home on my couch and wondered at my long-held fear. In quick succession a series of black and white photographic memories bombarded me: I am eight years old. This was an attack against my body and my everlasting soul. That moment was the beginning of my healing journey.

I chose to go to the pastor of my parish. He told me to meditate on Christ crucified on the Cross. That was way beyond my ken. There was a parish program on clerical abuse that was held during the crisis when the scandal reached national proportions. I realized I was not a lone victim, but the revelation horrified me as I contemplated so many victims, all the victims. I attended the church program, and there were small group discussions. When I shared that I had been assaulted as a child, I could see other parishioners shrink away as if I were a leper. The social worker who led the group offered to speak with me after the program, and I was comforted knowing he was at least one understanding soul.

The flashbacks gradually abated.... <Years later> feeling like I had done all I humanly could, I decided to reflect on the crucified Christ. And I did so. Repeatedly. Eventually I remembered that Christ died for our sins, not just my sins, but the sins of all of us, including priests who sexually assault children. For me, forgiveness was the key to my overcoming my anger and fears.

Finally, I participated in a Healing Arts project.... The song “Blessed Assurance” became my anthem call. I ended quoting Isaiah 40:30. I discovered

closure, and I was released of the burden of my shame and fear.

*Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength;  
they will mount up with wings like eagles.  
They will run and not get tired,  
they will walk and not become weary.<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>19</sup> Excerpt from "Finding Closure" by Bridget McGill publishing in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, May 1, 2016. Bridget McGill is an Irish immigrant, lifelong Catholic, wife, and mother with education and work experience in early childhood education. She has earned certification and is commissioned as a Spiritual Director in the Diocese of Peoria. She founded St. Brigid's Well which is a center for spiritual growth and development in Urbana IL.

# Mothering While Surviving

## How Parenting (and Grandparenting) Heals

**Kathy O'Connell**

I have found healing for my own wounded childhood by watching my children and grandchildren grow up.

From the very beginning of my becoming a mother, I knew keeping my children safe was my first priority. Not that I was overly protective, yet I was cautious about whom they spent time with and where they were. I spoke to them at a young age regarding the dignity of their bodies, and I was careful to be sure they could be watchful about appropriate and inappropriate actions and touches. Being a mother and being able to protect them were among the most important gifts I feel that motherhood has given to me.

What mattered was that my children would not have to endure any pain that I had experienced as an abused child. Watching them grow, watching them become mature and able to protect themselves, it all brought peace to my own heart. I knew that, unlike myself who was unable to protect myself, my kids would find it easier to protect themselves from sexual abuse because they had my permission to listen to their instincts and because they knew I would listen to them if they ever felt the need for help.

To know my children were empowered in this way brought healing to my wounded soul. I did not kid myself. I knew and know that not everyone can escape abuse no matter how watchful or careful we may be, but I also knew that my children knew the signs of grooming and would not hesitate to question an abuser's unwelcome advances even if he was a well-known or powerful person in our lives.

With time, of course, my children became adults and parents of their own

children. I still felt the need to protect them as adults, and to protect my grandchildren. However, as I watch my children raise their little ones, I am relieved and confident that they, too, are aware of abuse and are able to share with the next generation the right and the wrong ways of being touched. These are very small lessons in the grand scheme of parenting, yet they are remarkably important in our world today.

In knowing my children and grandchildren are empowered and informed, I find a great peace of mind—and healing to the child I was, the hurt child within me still.

And, I continue to pray that sexual abuse never harms my children and grandchildren. Actually, I pray that such abuse never harms any child ever again, but, unfortunately, I realize abusers still exist in our world. My prayer, then, too, is that you ensure children and grandchildren in your life are safer by informing and empowering them.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> First published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, May 13, 2018.



# T e l l i n g   F a m i l i e s

## Telling One's Children

**Michael D. Hoffman**

On the 6pm national newscast for several nights, the story of the brave women confronting Larry Nassar in court, affected me deeply. During this time, my 20-year-old daughter was home from college. My wife, my daughter and I listened to the stories in silence. The brave women recounted a culture of silence, adults who didn't heed the warning signs, parents whose trust was betrayed, painful physical and emotional trauma, and a litany of tragic consequences of how all of that has affected their lives as children and as they have grown into adulthood.

The story is all too familiar for me. My abuse was facilitated by a very bad man who groomed me, and my parents into trusting him, much like Dr. Nassar did. A culture of silence was the norm as no one dared to speak up. None of the other priests, staff or other adults heeded any of the warning signs for many years. As a result, I was sexually abused by my abuser and I am left with emotional scars which have broken my heart and caused anxiety and stress in my life.

Still listening in silence to the newscast, I gazed at my daughter, hoping, wishing, praying that nothing like that would ever happen to her. When the story finished, my daughter opened up, asking aloud why someone didn't help those girls. She felt that nurses, coaches, parents, other medical staff, or other school staff could have and should have seen that something was wrong and intervened. She went on to say how wrong it was for those bad things to happen to all of those girls. She asked aloud, how could this happen?

At our kitchen table, I answered her excellent question by briefly recounting my experience of how this happened in my life. She listened. I hope

she understood. I think so. Our conversation expanded to how we all relate to our family and friends. My wife, my daughter and I talked about actually listening, hearing and believing people and responding to them in a compassionate way. We went on to agree that it is healthy to tell one's story to trusted adults, no matter what happened. At our kitchen table, this experience helped me to reconcile myself to my own story, and how that continues to affect me and my family today.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Excerpt from an article "Around Our Kitchen Table," first published in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, April 21, 2018.

## A P o e t ' s W i s d o m

### Norbert Krapf

WE CAN START BY TELLING even only small parts of our story to people we feel we can trust. So maybe there is a good friend you can start with. Talking with this friend will bring you great relief. You don't have to tell the whole story all at once. I am on my second book about healing from child abuse, but even in two books I will not have been able to tell my whole story.

Every time we survivors tell anyone we trust something about our abuse, we heal just a little. There are many professionals who can help you in your effort to recover and move on.... There are stages of the recovery process that the diocesan victim assistance coordinator will help you begin. I didn't report the abuse in my past until fifty years after it ended. It is never too late to help yourself. I know people who say, "What's the use of talking about this fifty years later? Let sleeping dogs lie." I am not one of them.

As my therapist has said to me repeatedly, if you keep the monster silent inside of you, it will grow bigger and bigger and could start to eat you alive. Every step you take to recover will help shrink that monster, give you more power, and make you feel better. You will be taking control, gaining more power with each step. Just checking your Catholic diocesan website or, if you are not Catholic, other websites for a phone number to call or an email address to write to will make the monster begin to shrink. Even just going to that website and thinking about taking that step will make you feel better. You won't feel so threatened by the "dirty little secret" you have kept to yourself. You could write out on paper, in notes or outline, what you'd like to say, like when and where the abuse took place and the name of your abuser.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Excerpt from a longer article, "For Survivors Attempting to Decide," written by Norbert Krapf based on chapter from his book *Shrinking the Monster: Healing the Wounds of Our Abuse*. Copyright © 2016 Norbert Krapf. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, September 1, 2016.

## **And, How One Victim Assistance Coordinator Makes a Difference**

IN 2007, I COMPOSED A LETTER to the Bishop Gerald Gettelfinger of the Diocese of Evansville, Illinois, where I had been abused as a young boy by our parish priest 50 years earlier. I had just begun to talk openly about what happened to me and had begun to turn to my poetry to let the memories and feelings out of the places where I had buried them. Now I was turning to the Church to support my therapy and spiritual direction. My concern was not to gain revenge or to punish anyone, including my abuser, who was long deceased. My purpose was then, and has always been, to begin to heal myself and to help other survivors of abuse heal by whatever talents I have. But, first, I had to focus on my own process for healing.

Before long, the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the diocese, to whom I refer as Madeleine in my new memoir *Shrinking the Monster* to respect her privacy, was in touch by telephone. As she documented my story and got to know me and my family, Madeleine was always warm, compassionate and appreciative of my decision to help others find a way through the difficult process of telling the truth about childhood abuse by writing about it. She praised what she called my courage and supported my efforts. She valued my honesty.

Now, when a poet is writing poems about such a traumatic and difficult subject as being a survivor of child abuse, a subject that to many is still taboo, there are many obstacles to be overcome. If you start censoring yourself early in the process, you short circuit what you are doing and can easily prevent yourself from writing a poem that could be an effective and powerful one because you no longer trust yourself. Madeleine's appreciation of this poetic process in all her communication with me was an important affirmation of what I had done and was in the process of doing at that point, when there was still a lot of uncertainty, insecurity, and sometimes anxiety in what I will call my "*Catholic Boy Blues*

experience.”

I knew it was way too early to share my poems on abuse with Madeleine. In fact, I trusted and respected her, but the time was not right to share these poems with her or anyone else from the diocese or from the hierarchy of the Church that had, in effect, protected my abuser and many other abusers in so many parishes in so many countries.

Madeleine’s encouraging and affirmative voice as victim assistance coordinator helped me hear in advance those voices, which may include yours, dear reader: “lifting as one,” helping others, including our children and their children and their children’s children. I believe that when a trained professional says genuinely complimentary things such as Madeleine did to me, it can make survivors of childhood abuse feel that what they are doing in telling their story is not only worthwhile but important and helps give them the courage to continue and persist. I know it did for me.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Excerpt from “A Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator’s Role in Shrinking the Monster” which was, in turn, an excerpt published by permission from *Shrinking the Monster: Healing the Wounds of Our Abuse*. Copyright © 2016 Norbert Krapf. All rights reserved. First printed in *The Healing Voices Magazine*, February 17, 2017. Norbert Krapf is a husband, father, son, brother, friend, former Indiana Poet Laureate, and award-winning author of twenty-six books. He is the survivor of clergy abuse as portrayed in his award-winning *Catholic Boy Blues: A Poet’s Journal of Healing*.



## A S p o u s e ' s S t o r y

### **Sarah Riggins**

On New Year's Day in 1994, shortly after celebrating our 21<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary, my husband and I were returning home from visiting his father, who was dying of leukemia. As they had unresolved issues between them, I encouraged him to seek counsel from our pastor, a frequent dinner guest at our table. He had helped me immensely after my own father's death. When my husband resisted, I said "You know he helped me. He is easy to talk to. *Why* won't you trust him?" He was driving, but, irritated by my insistence, my husband blurted out that he couldn't trust our pastor because he had been sexually abused by a priest.

My first reaction was tears—for the pain that he must have been experiencing alone for almost 40 years. I said, "That explains a lot...." The moodiness, the self-medication with alcohol, the constant TV or music in the background: these were about constant escape. Even his impatience when he drove was explained by the fact that he frequently had traveled with his abuser in the past and, now, did not like being "trapped" behind a slow-moving vehicle.

It turned out that I was the only person whom my husband had ever told, and he swore me to secrecy. For the next 16 months, I carried the burden of our shared secret alone. I knew my husband desperately needed help, but I had made a promise. I was on my own to offer love, support, and gentle encouragement to him to seek that help.

In time, I was relieved when he told someone else, and I was sure the therapy that ensued would help. To my dismay, an inappropriate therapy combined with medication seemed to make matters worse. Being a devoted Catholic, actively involved in my parish and a daily communicant with a regular

prayer life at that time, I became all the more devoted. Prayer would provide what therapy lacked.

My husband tried another therapist, and eventually there were four. Between therapists Number 2 and Number 3, we found a dear Franciscan nun who started us on the right path. By the time we found her, the extent of the abuse of children by clergy and its cover-up were national news.

That is when my own crisis of faith started to unfold. I was not angry at the abuser, assuming that he was mentally ill, but I was shocked and outraged at those who knowingly failed to stop the abuse and prevent future victims. Now I started to question not only their judgment, but their teachings as well. Were any of them true? Does God truly exist? And if He does, why didn't He act?

Our Franciscan nun encouraged us to contact the diocese where my husband's abuser was still in active ministry in 2004. In his response, the bishop, who had my husband's abuser residing in his diocese, restored my hope that there were good and holy members of the hierarchy who wanted to help victims and protect children. We unfortunately had quite the opposite experience with the bishop of the diocese where the abuse had occurred.

Meanwhile, we were living in a different diocese from the dioceses where the abuser had been stationed. Here, in our home diocese, the bishop held the first Mass for the victims of abuse at the Cathedral. We attended and met the Victim Assistance Coordinator, who encouraged us to meet privately with our bishop. At the end of the meeting, my husband said "If there is anything I can do to help, I am happy to do so." Bishop took my husband up on his offer, and the result has been a wonderful transformation. "The secret" has now been told in small gatherings and in a very public way in a Catholic News Service article with my husband's name and photo attached. My husband now realizes that the shame is not his, and he has found the good that can come of his experience by helping others.

I attend the various programs offered by our diocese with my husband as



his support person. I have found them to be as helpful to me personally as they are to him. I have gleaned insights into some of my husband's behaviors from the stories of other survivors and their spouses. The reflections offered, the tales of spiritual journey, and the loving support of Bishop and all associated with the Office of Victim Assistance have nurtured my once-faltering faith. My faith in the Church and hope in the goodness of at least some of the hierarchy has been restored—only time will tell if complete trust can ever follow.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> First published in *The Healing Voices*, May 1, 2016. Sarah Riggins is a bookkeeper in pediatric health care and married to clergy-abuse survivor Norm Riggins, who is a long-time leadership trainer and executive coach and has served on the Review Board of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia. Sarah and Norm were instrumental in the founding the survivor community there.



# L o v e d O n e s

## Be Sure to Care for Family Members, Too

**Teresa Pitt Green**

. For every survivor of any trauma, there is a network of Loved Ones who are affected. Like survivors, their Loved Ones need emotional and spiritual support, even psychological counseling. Often, they need basic information before they can believe they are suffering, too.

“Secondary trauma” has received focused study during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century as a phenomenon among trauma-care workers, e.g., health care, emergency room care, first responders. Research was trying to understand “compassion fatigue” and “vicarious wounding” in order to recommend how the “compassion professions” could avoid burnout. More recently, a few studies expanded into families, e.g., children of Holocaust survivors, or families of troops returning from battle.<sup>25</sup>

Even without research, we can understand a secondary wound. Our hearts shudder at the sight of a mother on the opposite side of the planet gazing on her emaciated child, whose ghostly eyes stare at the ruins of war. We are troubled as a friend cares for a spouse, parent, or sibling with Alzheimer’s disease, or inoperable cancer, or post-traumatic stress, or addiction.

A relatively new trend in medicine has seen demonstrably higher success rates when medical protocol for savaging illnesses (e.g., cancers or HIV/AIDS)

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<sup>25</sup> This does not rule out the insights of other scholarship, such as Bowen family theory, but it does follow a common and cautionary theme in my work that anyone who has survived abuse recovers better and more fully when the counseling and ministry offered to them is trauma-informed. The literature here is focused on the relatively newer scholarship around trauma and its individual cognitive and behavioral effects on survivor and others in relationship to the survivor.

includes emotional, psychological, and spiritual support. Loved Ones are recognized partners in this process, receiving practical, basic training. There are also support networks. I regularly refer the Caregiver Action Network and the family program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous has, in less than a century, helped hundreds of millions of alcoholics, drug addicts, and others with self-destructive compulsions recover and resume productive, spiritually vibrant lives. With these same principles, a family-focused program exists for the Loved Ones of addicts. For them, recovery addresses wounds and pain which are similar to those of the addicts, but distinct. One telling principle is that Loved Ones bear the wounds whether they are still in relationship with or estranged from the addict.

Addicts are not the same as survivors, like myself. However, those whom we love do reflect the impact of abuse on our lives. Similarly, a spouse or sibling or child can be wounded by addiction in someone else's life. Moreover, addictions are common among survivors: by some accounts, 90% of women in AA during the 1990s were survivors of sexual abuse. For every one of those women, there was a network of Loved Ones who bore the imprint of abuse and addiction by one degree of separation.

Even less known than personal wounds are relational travesties. That's because people harbor romanticized ideas about how Loved Ones "should" react to trauma—or secondary trauma. Astronomical divorce rates among parents of children dying from cancer. Abandonment by one spouse of another spouse who becomes chronically ill. Families torn asunder when one member breaks the secret and alleges abuse—with the accuser often threatened or ostracized, or supported by a few family members. Personal wounds have relational impact. This is the world of trauma which many cannot bear to admit, but it is where the Lord stands to save, too, no matter where trauma—or secondary trauma—has driven us.

I receive many emails because of my writing and my social media presence. More often, I hear from Loved Ones than survivors of abuse. Loved Ones are

every bit as tortured emotionally and spiritually as survivors whom I've met. They are racked by guilt, despite obvious limitations such as being a child at the time of abuse. Like survivors, Loved Ones subject themselves to brutal self-recrimination. They need access to fundamental information, and emotional and spiritual care. They need to be reminded that their own stories matter as much as the story which the survivor may be struggling to piece together. They need permission to tend to their own lives. They arrive often simply exhausted and lost. They are suffering...in relationship.

This is, too, secondary trauma. This is, too, vicarious wounding. Here, too, is the risk of burnout, or compassion fatigue, or disruptive behaviors associated with post-traumatic stress.

The literature can be helpful by affirming that secondary suffering exists and warrants care. Yet, the research offered professionals suggestions like limited shifts, mandatory time off, and home-work balance. Salubrious as these practices are, they do not directly speak to caregivers in personal crisis or, even more so, in pain after a family has been torn apart by abuse revelations. The punch-clock out of suffering vicariously as a Loved One looks very, very different from the professional who suffers in relation to victims.

### **Three Healing Images**

Here are just three images I offer to Loved Ones for reflection that blend the practical with the spiritual support people need and deserve in their vicarious pain.

Consider the prescription made by the flight attendant as the jet departs the gate and taxis toward takeoff. In case of an emergency, adults are told to don their own oxygen mask before helping a child. This is a critical concept. Loved Ones must feel the permission to restore personal order in their own lives, which often have become an emotional rollercoaster in relation to survivors.

Then, there is Simon of Cyrene. Yes, Simon did carry the Cross and offer

the Lord relief. Yet, it's critical to understand that Simon carried the wood, not the Lord's full burden of human salvation. Broadly, people harbor a false notion that Loved Ones can relieve or share a survivor's burden. That is not true. As an antidote for that poison, I ask Loved Ones to engage in a prayerful reflection, imagining that very instant exactly when Simon had to place the heavy Cross back on the shoulders of an innocent Man. This practice is, similar to the flight attendant, another way to activate healthful emotional and spiritual boundaries between the survivor and Loved One. The point is not to create a rupture of cold detachment. What's important is to ensure that, in relationship, "compassion" remains defined as "suffering with" and not "suffering because of." That is just one reason Loved Ones, and often survivors, benefit greatly from prayerful reflection about how no one can carry the cross of another—and that each of us has a distinct cross to bear.

One of my common refrains to any Loved One is that, in supporting a survivor, it's critical to be mindful about what is and is not his or hers. No Loved One owns that cross of direct abuse, and we survivors at our darkest hour can wish our crosses away—or try to pass them to another. Here is the unhealthy temptation in that dynamic which Simon's image brings into focus: we cannot become lost in—or enmeshed with—each other's suffering. We must know and live within our individual boundaries, our own suffering, and our own responsibility for self-care if we wish to heal in relationship after abuse or trauma. No, this truth is not easy. Its alternatives promise to be, however, devastating.

A last image is poignant and pointed, but still offers grace in paradox: Michelangelo's *Pietà*. Loved Ones naturally identify with Mary's suffering, and to all she offers comfort without tire. Yet, when the time is spiritually right, Loved Ones may need to step further into the mystery where Mary's pain is not as it seems. Her swoon has more than one meaning. Her suffering has more dimension. True, Mary is a suffering mother who could not save her Son, but she is also a person simultaneously being saved by the death of the Son in her arms. As she

gazes on Him with a mother's broken heart, she is also witnessing her Lord delivering her from suffering.

Reflected in the *Pietà*, this paradox is a challenge. Loved Ones, like survivors, can despair of God or lose a certainty about Providence. While tending a survivor's wounds or death, it can be natural for Loved Ones to wonder where God has gone. In the *Pietà* Loved Ones often find assurance that, despite what is apparent now, the Lord has defeated death and vanquished the very forces that can seem to have triumphed in abuse and trauma—and secondary trauma.

Research can be wonderful, but it is the Spirit who reveals these truths. Human suffering and evil existed long before the scientific method sought to study them. Abuse and trauma both test and deepen our belief in what the Spirit has revealed. The stories of survivors and Loved Ones can bring the Spirit into our own lives. In stories, all of us live in relationship. Michelangelo coaxed out of cold marble a vignette from the greatest story ever told, and naturally all of us are drawn to Mary's grief, but then led by her love into to the deeper reality of her swoon in the *Pietà*.

Learning how the ripples of abuse extend far from first impact, we see how a single dead stone can affect lives and relationships in families, parishes, and our Church family as well. Responding in faith, we can be the drop of love that leaves all the expanse of trauma, suffering, evil, and death shuddering with the reminder of how the story of time ends in the Lord's victory.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> This article is an excerpt from a 100-page book of reflections for survivor's family members and loved ones, written by Teresa Pitt Green and to be published next year by Spirit Fire as *Wounded: By One Degree of Separation*. It also served as one in a series of related articles written at the invitation of *Orthodoxy in Dialogue*, which is a leading blog for the Orthodox Church published and edited by doctoral students of theology at the University of Toronto.





## W h y B o t h e r ?

### **Teresa Pitt Green**

There are many compelling reasons not to disrupt a settled life and explore ways to return to the faith setting, to Catholicism, where we have been so terribly wounded for life..., but knowing what I know now, here's why I'm glad I did.

In our suffering we gain astounding capacities for feeling, for appreciating, for creativity, for sensing others, for loving. Yet, our wounds restrain these gifts. As we heal psychologically, emotionally and spiritually, we are freer to offer what gifts we have drawn from our suffering to a suffering world. We become more than we could have even imagined before we took one step forward, out of the boat and onto the water.

It's worth the struggle to face our past abuse, our current limitations, and our divine destinies. That's not something our reason can comprehend. It's something our hearts know. My wish for all survivors and family members is that, by stepping forward, you can make, like I have made, a profound break in the chain that can keep us bound to our predators for a lifetime, through their impact on our personalities, our relationships, and our freedom to love and live spontaneously. When we claim our identities as children of God we reject the lies predators said and showed us, that we were worthless, disposable and consumable. This is the real break with the past I wish for all survivors of child sexual abuse by clergy or any other trusted authority figure.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> First published in the survivor newsletter created and distributed by the Archdiocese of Chicago, November 2015.



## E p i l o g u e

AS CARL JUNG WROTE, in relationship we are wounded, and in relationship we must heal. God has revealed Himself as relationship, as Trinity. His very nature is perfect, complete, fully alive. The pastoral challenge is coaxing people who have been wounded by the Church toward the healing and completion and new life a relationship with Him can give them—through the sacraments.

Fluency in trauma *as it relates to Scripture and the Catholic faith* is a path of hope. Like achieving any level of fluency, it is not simply an academic study. It is not an intellectual exercise. It is a lived understanding. Language is learned in relationship with native speakers, in this case with survivors of clergy abuse and loved ones where they are, often in a strange land of spiritual exile. Fluency builds a bridge home for them and those who love them. Homecoming heals more than the exiles. It heals their pastoral companions, too. This is the incarnational nature of a healing dialogue in our Church which necessarily includes survivors.

Fluency in trauma is one gift which survivors and loved ones, returning from exile in silence and isolation, can bring to the Church. Integrating faith with recovery, these new partners in healing can help the Church serve the significant minority of Catholics in the pews who also suffer from abuse or trauma of a different kind but with similar impact—and to turn boldly into a zeitgeist of dead-end victimhood with the message of healing, hope and new life.

This is a great evangelical moment.

Be courageous.

Be inspired.

## R e s o u r c e s

### **Acts of Recovery:**

#### **One Man's Ongoing Healing After Abuse by a Priest**

**Michael D. Hoffman**

One of our founders, Mike offers here is remarkable story, told honestly and bravely, about his unique journey to heal after having been sexually abused as a child by a priest who was a trusted family friend. After memories were triggered in 2006 by a newspaper article with his abuser's name and the name of other victims, Mike took what he calls his "twelve acts of recovery" which involved sharing his truth with family and Church, revisiting places to put memories to rest, and ultimately moving forward to become a child-protection and abuse-survivor advocate.

#### **Veronica's Veil: A Christ-Centered Guide for Spiritual Companionship for Adult Survivors of Child Abuse**

**By Rev. Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS, and Teresa Pitt Green**

A workbook offering a common language for healing dialogue between any adult who wishes to integrate their Catholic faith into the arduous psychological recovery from child abuse through spiritual guidance from priests, deacons, religious sisters or ministers. Based on the authors' successful workshops, presentations and retreats. *Imprimatur, nihil obstat.*

#### **Restoring Sanctuary**

**Teresa Pitt Green**

A chronicle of encounters with obstacles and helpers leading the author back to her Catholic faith after having been abused by priests.

## **Catholic Boy Blues: A Poet’s Journal of Healing**

**By Norbert Krapf**

Former Indiana Poet Laureate, Pulitzer Prize nominee, emeritus and professor of English at Long Island University, Norbert is the author of twenty-five critically acclaimed books. After struggling for 55 years after having been a victim of childhood sexual abuse, Norbert confronted his past with the power of his writing these 130 poems, offering survivors comfort, healing, and a sense of freedom from the long-term effects of abuse.

## **The Maria Goretti Network: Principles and Practices**

**Miguel Prats and Fr. Gavin Vaverek, JCL**

The Maria Goretti Network/MGN is a ministry to victims (of any kind of abuse or violence) that offers a blend of 12 Step traditions and Catholic devotions and settings. This book (available as a free PDF online) is a how-to guide for starting and running a chapter of the MGN in a diocese or local parish.

## **You Have Set Us Free**

**Rev. Kenneth Schmidt**

*You Have Set Us Free* presents 27 episodes from the Gospels which took place during the final week of Jesus’ life with a reflection on how it connects to the life experience of a trauma survivor, and ends with a prayer passage. The work is designed for reflection, increasing awareness, and learning new ways to think, feel and behave in a process of sanctification.

## **Survivor Survey**

IN 2018, The Healing Voices Magazine conducted a survey of 18 clergy-abuse survivors working with its editorial team regarding current outreach efforts and events – or lack thereof – in their dioceses. Study is available for free on request.

## **C o m i n g   S o o n !**

### **The Spirit Fire Model: An Integrated Pastoral Response**

**By Luis A. Torres, Jr.**

From co-founder and co-director of Spirit Fire, a practical guide for an integrated pastoral response to survivors of clergy abuse, including review boards, independent review and compensation interface, and participatory approaches to engage the whole Church in healing.

### **Book of Prayer for the Healing in the Catholic Church**

**Deborah Kloos**

From clergy-abuse survivor, Deborah Kloos, who addressed the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2018 and who lives a tireless prayer ministry for the Church

### **Wounded: By One Degree of Separation**

**Teresa Pitt Green**

Reflections for survivors' family members and loved ones

### **Spirit Fire dot Live**

The Spirit Fire website has over 30 free webinars and 50 articles and transcripts from retreats and workshops available right now for free. In 2019, the Spirit Fire website continue to grow its resources and reviews of existing books, retreats, and cutting-edge programs or approaches for pastoral care and healing dialogue.

# You're Invited

## OUTREACH

### Parish Events for Hope and Healing

**Michael D. Hoffman**

Based on years developing Masses and Prayer Services for Hope and Healing in the Archdiocese of Chicago and *The Healing Voices Magazine*, Mike Hoffman is developing a quick-take workbook for parishes (and dioceses) to use to host their own events for hope and healing, from Masses and prayer services to related discussion groups, peace circles or presentations.

The book includes sample forms and checklists to make planning and hosting events easy from kickoff meeting through the day of the event.

Mike is working on a consultative basis with Spirit Fire and a number of dioceses to hone the workbook by helping them set up and host their own healing prayer events. If you would like to explore participating in this project in 2019, please contact Spirit Fire for more information at [teresa@spiritfire.live](mailto:teresa@spiritfire.live).



## S t . P a t r i c k ' s P r a y e r

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through a belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
Of the Creator of creation.

I arise today  
Through the strength of Christ's birth and His baptism,  
Through the strength of His crucifixion and His burial,  
Through the strength of His resurrection and His ascension,  
Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.

I arise today  
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,  
In obedience of angels,  
In service of archangels,  
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,  
In the prayers of patriarchs,  
In preachings of the apostles,  
In faiths of confessors,  
In innocence of virgins,  
In deeds of righteous men.

I arise today  
Through the strength of heaven;  
Light of the sun,



Splendor of fire,  
 Speed of lightning,  
 Swiftmess of the wind,  
 Depth of the sea,  
 Stability of the earth,  
 Firmness of the rock.

I arise today  
 Through God's strength to pilot me;  
 God's might to uphold me,  
 God's wisdom to guide me,  
 God's eye to look before me,  
 God's ear to hear me,  
 God's word to speak for me,  
 God's hand to guard me,  
 God's way to lie before me,  
 God's shield to protect me,  
 God's hosts to save me  
 From snares of the devil,  
 From temptations of vices,  
 From every one who desires me ill,  
 Afar and anear,  
 Alone or in a mulitude....

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
 Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
 Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
 Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,  
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,

Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,  
Christ in the eye that sees me,  
Christ in the ear that hears me.

I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,  
Through a belief in the Threeness,  
Through a confession of the Oneness  
Of the Creator of creation.

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**Spirit Fire**

Alexandria, Virginia

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