

QUESTION: (edited) I am a Catholic woman, and there have been some very painful experiences of abuse by nuns, brothers and priests in my family, including a few I experienced personally. How common is my life experience?

For the last 27 years I've spent thousands of hours researching the subject of sexual abuse, torture, and murder by Catholic priests, brothers and nuns –I had my own experiences.

At the age of eight in grade school, we heard the cries of a little boy getting beaten in the Principal's office—I don't mean simply spanked. That child was being beaten by a nun whose anger was clearly out of control.

At the age of 13 there was talk about several boys having been molested, and how the priests berated the parents when they reported the abuse—but nothing happened to the accused.

One of the nuns was also abused by one of the priests. Both 'stories' were eventually confirmed.

My grandmother was sent to America at age six. She was temporarily placed in a Catholic orphanage in Chicago until her mother arrived from Poland. Even at age 75 she couldn't talk about the abuse without sobbing.

When my son was 13, he was sexually abused by two Salesian Brothers in Tampa Florida.

ANSWER: You are and have been a devoted Catholic all your life. Unfortunately, your experience of abuse extends over three generations of your family. This is common—all too common for Catholic families.

What is different is your devotion to studying this aspect of our church that we hoped would be honest and responsible. We also hope that priests and bishops will protect us all, especially the young and helpless. Although they tout their written statements and make protestations of protection, almost nothing has changed in the system.

Bishops and religious are steeped in denial and knee-jerk reactions to the facts of sexual activity and abuse in their ranks. They are still preoccupied and consumed with self-protection. And they often lie.