

QUESTION: In all of the adults you've interviewed who suffered childhood abuse by clergy, have there been any common traits among those who have managed to find success and happiness in their lives?

ANSWER: Yes, I have met many men and women who have suffered sexual abuse by priests and bishops who seem to be unscathed. That is the outward appearance—unharmed.

They retain their scars. They do not have to display them, but everyone who deals well with their suffering has confronted the truth of their abuse.

That is not an easy process. Often the perpetrator is someone who promised (selfless) love—parent, relative, priest. The betrayal leaves its marks [Cf. *Damage of Abuse*, this web] and the challenges to be overcome remain throughout a lifetime. Don't forget you have suffered trauma. Have compassion for yourself.

Grace and luck seem to play a large part in helping us cope with trauma. Be honest about your trauma; share it with someone who understands; put guilt where it belongs—on the perpetrator not yourself. (Yes on the church).

Some victims find their survival in activism. Not everyone finds this necessary or possible, but many find that helpful. Many survivors and their families have to leave the church and even shun it and its ministers. That can be of some value to the healing process.

This movement has led over one-third of people brought up Catholic to identify themselves as “former Catholics”. Eventually this real movement may bring church authority to awareness of the harm it does.

Face the truth of your trauma; have compassion for your suffering; do no harm to yourself or others; embrace yourself and know that love does heal. Don't give up

QUESTION: You say that you cannot, or do not, leave the Church. What, then, is your faith practice? I feel now—apart from the still-traumatic feelings—I have about being inside a Church building—that to participate in the liturgy is in a real way participating in the abuse and violation.

ANSWER: You are not alone; many victims feel this same struggle, wanting religious consolation and diastase and distrust for the institution. I am one with you on this. The scars of abuse are recorded deep inside us and the betrayal by the church is real—more real than its ministry.

Church authority still lacks empathy for the life long suffering that abuse inflicts. It forgives its own sins too easily and continues to tolerate sexual activity in other clergy. At the same time, they condemn healthy sexual activity between loving partners.

No more than 50% of Catholic clergy at any one time are practicing celibacy. This means that the sexual structure is corrupt and a farce. Certainly there are good priests, but not in sufficient numbers to keep the boat afloat. This is what this Reformation of the Church is all about.

It is similar to those that have gone before; “The Church always reforming” Constantly in need of reform. Theologian Romano Guardini said, “The Church is the cross on which Christ is crucified daily.” The institution of the church is no better now than it was at the time of the Protestant Reformation. The core of the corruption is the host of problems called human sexuality.

Have courage my friend. The reality of God will endure despite the clergy.