

IMPACT STATEMENT FROM MARY EATHER.

At the time of the attempted rape by the priest, I was terrified and knew something bad was happening to me. I also felt that God was doing this because all I could focus on was the crosses that the priest was wearing on his collar. My relationships with my peers immediately changed because I had to keep this secret. I was scared about what would happen to me, by the priest or by God, if I did not keep the secret and tell no one as he made me promise. I did not have the words to either understand or describe my own sexuality or the abuse which happened to me and this left me very confused as I grew older and as I had to begin to negotiate my way through relationships with boys and men.

The impact on my adult life has been the inability to regain the capacity to trust anyone and particularly men. I have been unable to sustain a marriage and have no close friendships with my peers. I have never been able to experience sexual pleasure, and have developed a strong dislike to sex. I have never been able to understand the lingering anger within me and the outrage within about what happened to me. I have not been able to sustain employment due to my anger, and my inability to build healthy relationships with people who are in a position of trust or authority over me.

I am a single parent, with three sons. I have endeavored to raise my sons so that they would not experience the pain and trauma that I did, despite sometimes-difficult circumstances. Unfortunately the effect of the attempted rape, the institutional abuse, and lack of education I received, the quality of my family life has been affected. My sons find it difficult to understand why I am the way I am? Since the publicity about St. Joseph's has increased, the impact on my parenting and relationship with the boys has at times been difficult.

The greatest impact of the attempted rape was the shattering of my confidence in God. Prior to this trauma, I had been a very religious person. I felt and communicated daily and constantly to the presence of God. God was who enabled me to cope with difficulties and the abuses I experienced at St. Joseph's Home. After the incident with the priest I could no longer connect, or rely on my sense of relationship with God. I lost a very precious part of myself and could no longer draw the strength from the Mass, from the prayers, and from my own personal spirituality. All these rituals became empty and I felt and still feel a great emptiness inside me. Something in me was shattered and I have not been able to re-establish any sense of spirituality in my adult life. It was my strong sense of religion which made the priest stop when I said, "It is a mortal sin". Even despite this, for all these years, it is I who have carried the burden of being the sinner and being banished from God.

