

BETRAYED BY VICTIMS' ADVOCATES

The following is a first-hand account of a clergy sexual abuse victim. Last year, he met with Catholic League staff in New York City; we are protecting his anonymity. Some of what he recounts was previously noted by Catholic News Agency.

As an adolescent victim of homosexual clergy abuse, I know the challenges that men face in coming forward. Many of us are silenced in shame after being abused by our homosexual superiors. Aggravating the recovery process is that, despite the evidence, there is an ongoing agenda to cover up the homosexual nature of the abuse crisis, disenfranchising more than 80% of us victims.

Recovery is difficult enough without predatory advocacy groups and their lawyers trolling us for profit and politics. The added torment of being told the problem isn't related to homosexuality only compounds our pain. For this reason, I am grateful to the Catholic League for giving me the opportunity to relay the difficulties facing victims of homosexual abuse in particular, with all due respect and recognition of the grief suffered by victims who were subjected to heterosexual abuse.

For all of us men who were robbed of the opportunity to allow our sexual identities to mature before being assaulted, the abuse may be ruinous, to the point that some victims never speak of it. Sadly, the odds of suicide attempts are 2-4 times higher among women and a staggering 4-11 times higher for men compared to those who are not abused. These statistics do not account for the compounded effect of betrayal of our faith caused by our spiritual fathers.

I never spoke a word about my abuse until seven years later,

feeling safe only to disclose under the seal of confession. The problem was that I didn't know that the priest behind the confessional screen was an active homosexual. So, when I confessed to him, and he offered to help me, I didn't know I was being solicited.

I was 22 years old, it was 1989, and there was no public knowledge of the predatory homosexual cadre in our Church. Over the ensuing 18 months the priest from the confessional provided pastoral counseling, but I was also subjected to lewd homosexual conversation and harassment. It was complicated, I was benefitting from his counseling as I was preparing for medical school and hoping to get better, so I tolerated his sporadic foulness. I became dialed into my faith like never before, attending mass and praying on my knees every night. I seemed to be recovering. But that all ended one night when he phoned me, ostensibly drunk, blurting out the most appalling sexual propositions. It was truly devastating. After that I could no longer sit through a mass. I left the Church, vowing I would never speak about my abuse again.

Decades would pass before I found myself in professional counseling. Not knowing I had PTSD, I was dealing with severe anxiety. I didn't intend to tell the psychologist about the abuse, however, he got to the source, and thus began my recovery. I was 44 years old, with a wife and four kids. We had made the difficult decision years earlier to educate our kids in Catholic schools.

I'd like to share some experiences I had in the recovery process to benefit other survivors and their families to learn from my mistakes, and for members of the Church to understand what happens to us victims when we step forward. Recovery is a difficult course to navigate with plenty of bad actors and hidden agendas out there.

The first step I took after coming forward was to learn what happened to my abuser. I found the "Bishop Accountability"

website and read that he had been incarcerated in Oklahoma for assaulting boys there. On that webpage I saw a banner ad for a group called "Road to Recovery".

I reached out, and had an immediate response by founder and former priest, Bob Hoatson. In that first email he asked if I would like an attorney. I was surprised by this, it wasn't why I was contacting him, I declined the solicitation and told him I only wanted to get better.

I took his counsel thinking he was an expert on clergy abuse. He appeared on CNN with Anderson Cooper and was in countless newspaper articles. He became a significant influence on me. Ultimately, under his influence, I brought a suit against the Church and I would leave the Church, again. I drew the line when Hoatson encouraged me to get my children out of the Church. Nonetheless, my family was going to mass without me with a negative effect on us.

Hoatson introduced me to the petulant attorney, Mitchell Garabedian, at the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) conference in Chicago. SNAP proclaims to be a support group for survivors, but what I experienced was anything but support for survivors. SNAP invited the shark attorneys, used the victims like chum, and watched the frenzy unfold.

I saw Jeff Anderson, the mega-sex abuse plaintiff attorney, giggly and excitedly prance around the conference to funnel money to SNAP. All the attorneys raised their hands to show how much they "cared", but it was an obvious pledge to their motherlode, SNAP. Anderson offered to match all donations up to \$50,000. I thought Anderson was entirely inappropriate and found his exuberance personally offensive for the occasion. I watched in disbelief as survivors were subjected to the machinations of SNAP.

After the victims were commoditized with attorneys in the

conference room, we broke into small groups. I was looking forward to this part, thinking someone could tell me how to break through. Our group leader, Patrick Wall, was an ex-priest. I thought, "surely these ex-priests, Hoatson and Wall, must be good people and can help." Instead, what happened in my small group had no therapeutic value. From my years of training in medicine, my assessment was that Mr. Wall had no skills in facilitating a group like this. There were about 10 men in my group and nothing was accomplished. Nothing.

Then, Wall told us he was an attorney working in Jeff Anderson's practice. My heart sank, my eyes welled up with tears. I went to the SNAP conference to get better, and I had hoped they would help, but all I saw was SNAP aligning victims with attorneys for money and to weaponize victims against the Church.

I left the small group session deflated, and sat in the hallway. A woman came asking if I was OK. I told her that SNAP wasn't what I thought it was going to be. She said, "I'm sorry that you feel that way." I asked if she was part of SNAP. She said no, "I am an attorney, here to see how I can help." She handed me her card. I felt sick and had to get out of there.

I found David Clohessy, the president of SNAP, in the hotel lobby. He authored an article about my abuser. I wanted to know where he got his information and where I could learn more. When asked, he couldn't remember writing the article. He couldn't give me any information about my abuser. I thought, "how can someone write an article and not remember a single thing about it?"

What I've come to learn over the years is that SNAP will regurgitate negative news about the Church to multiply the exposure. That's why Clohessy didn't remember his article. He did not offer to help me, he only apologized for not knowing anything.

Soon after the conference, a whistle blower, Gretchen Hammond successfully sued SNAP. She witnessed SNAP taking kickbacks from the attorneys. I was happy and felt vindicated that someone stood up for victims against SNAP.

Fast forwarding through the years, I was able to prosecute my abuser with a loophole in the statute of limitations. He was convicted, sentenced to prison, and will likely expire there. On December 23rd, 2017, I had a remarkable and unexpected reversion to our Faith. Being back in the Faith brought joy that superseded the happiness I was seeking in counseling.

Hoatson made some disparaging remarks about my return to the Church and my communication with him fell off. In reflection, I realized how he funneled victims to Garabedian, manipulating them much like SNAP. I asked Hoatson what his financial relationship was with Garabedian, he only said "Mitch takes good care of me."

In September of 2018, I was traveling across the Great Rift Valley in Africa, leading a team on a medical mission. I received an email from Hoatson in our satellite-equipped safari truck. He sent me his press release in response to the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report. It read, "homosexuals don't rape minors, predators rape minors." He went on, "sure, some homosexuals rape minors, and some heterosexuals rape minors," leading the reader to believe that there is no difference. He also implored Catholics to embrace homosexual and transgender priests.

I confronted him, asking him to add facts to his press release and tell the truth. I replied, "Bob, I was raped by a homosexual and you're telling the press that I wasn't. How do you think that makes me feel?" He told me I was the only survivor who felt that way. I reported this to Cardinal Tobin, in New Jersey, where Hoatson's organization is located. I learned that I am not the only survivor who feels disenfranchised by the position that homosexuality has nothing

to do with the crisis.

The effort to protect and harbor active homosexual priests in the Church adds insult to victims' injury. Many point to "clericalism" as a cause. Alright then, let's recognize that homosexuals far and away outpace heterosexuals in using clericalism as a means to an end. Can we stop with this politically correct nonsense? We are the Church, forever counter-cultural, with no duty to bow to the gay agenda.

Sometimes I hear words of hope. Like Pope Francis' statements on homosexuals in ministry. Recently our local rector sent out a notice about screening homosexuals from entering the seminary. In response, I immediately sent a \$1,000 donation in gratitude.

Today, SNAP continues to smear our Church. Recently, Clohessy appeared in my city with TV coverage accusing our Bishop of not including my abuser on a list of accused, highlighting my abuser on the news. But he was never in this archdiocese. I contacted the TV station and SNAP multiple times asking them to correct their false reporting but they never responded. SNAP created false news, smeared the Church, their mission accomplished. SNAP also recognized Bob Hoatson with an award last year.

Navigating the recovery process is tough. There are forces vying for victims' money and souls. However, for me, it was my return to the Catholic Faith that pulled me through the effects of abuse. I am grateful to God for that.