Child Sexual Abuse

Survival & Thriving
Teresa Pitt Green (pseudonym)

Survivor of abuse

Diocese of Arlington, Virginia
Impact

- Survivors
- USCCB OCYP Staff
- Review Boards
- Advisory Boards
- Offices of Child Protection
- Victim Assistance Coordinators
- Lay ministers
- Catholics in society and media
- Priests, Deacons, Sisters, Religious
- Bishops
Abuse as Betrayal
Aftermath & Pitfalls
Unlikely Healing Process
Encountering Diocesan Outreach
As if a million years ago in another time and place, I was a child, and, as a child, I was abused at any time and everywhere.... There was no safe zone.

(from Restoring Sanctuary)
Surrender as annihilation
Forgiveness as enabling
Caring as danger
Words as lies
Boundaries as illusion
Sacraments as human power
Growing up as flight
Achievement as meaningless
Pitfalls

- Drugs
- Drinking
- Self Abuse
- Abusive Relationships
- Isolation
- Mental Illness
- Physical Impact
#FeelingNado

- Shame
- Grief
- Anger, rage
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Incredulity
Triggers

- Roman collar
- Crucifix
- Inside church
- Outside church
- Stations of the Cross
- Rosary
- Incense
- Sound of echo/stone
- Sung Latin Mass
- Altar boys
- Music from Mass
- Statues
- Religious Christmas decorations
- Votive candles
- Old-style pulpit

- Older architecture
- Newer architecture
- Drawer closing in sanctuary
- Heels on church floor
- Triduum services
- Baptism services
- News pieces on Church
- Holy medal/scapular
- Children in uniforms
- Ecclesiastic dress
- Gregorian chanting
- Confessional
- Church parking lots
- Weddings
- Funerals
- Closed doors
Ne’er Do Well
Hapless Sloth
Plays on Emotions
Possible Anarchist
Parasite on National GDP
Barks, Growls, Noisy
Irrepressible
Sometimes embarrassing
Beginning

- Someone believed me.
- My life force was greater than my death wish.
- Authorities were wrong to dismiss my truth.
- This was not a sin I could confess.
Survivor Truths

#247 - We are not what happened to us.

#856 - We are not our illnesses.
Therapy

- Integration
- Commonalities
- Being heard
- Compassion
- Tools
- Wellness
Companionship
Prayer services
Healing Masses
Retreats
Discussion evenings
Survivor advisory group
Speaking/writing
Spiritual directors
A bunch of other stuff
Wounded Healers

- We all carry our own sins. Some of us carry the sins of others.
- Sometimes I have to choose between light and darkness many times every minute.
Catholics Listening

- Deacon training
- Priest training
- Therapists
- Advisory Board
- Review Board
- Diocesan Councils
Things Not To Say or Do

- “Forgive and forget.”
- “Just move on with your life.”
- “Get over it.”
- Don’t try to fix it.
- Don’t try to manage it.
- Don’t try to own it.
- No great big hug
- VAC as Litigator
Things to Say or Do

- It was not your fault.
- Jesus loves you.
- Depersonalize this person’s struggle.
- You are not the healing force.
- Have enough faith to stay out of the way.
Expectations

- Make peace and move on, or ...
- Mixed but fuller relationship
- Restoring a relationship with God
- Super delayed impact
- Ripples into families, communities
Veronica’s Cloth
Spiritual Companions in Surviving Abuse
Lewis S. Fiorelli, OSFS, and T. Pitt Green

Restoring Sanctuary
T. Pitt Green
Resurrected Wounds

- Not restoration to “normal”
- Nothing lost can be returned.
- Nothing wounded can be the same.
Teresa

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