

Resentment

By Curtis Jerry Smothers



Young Terry had every right to harbor resentment and hatred towards the man who molested and abused him. To make matters worse, the man was no ordinary man; he was a Catholic priest. Priests are supposed to be role models and protectors of the weak and spiritual guiders for the faithful.

His resentment went far beyond the priest; it spilled over to the Catholic bishop and other Church leaders who knew that the priest could not be trusted around boys. Whenever someone would complain, they would simply counsel the priest and transfer him to another parish, where, after a short respite, the priest would again fondle and molest the altar boys under his charge.

Terry learned through hard experience the mental patterns of the pedophile. The priest, while seeming to pray, actually preyed. What at first seemed just affectionate hugging and touching would advance to sexual fondling and ultimately illicit sexual contact with anyone the priest could lure to his room in the rectory. (Boys who knew what was going on would jokingly call it the “erectory.”)

After his encounter with the priest in his room, the boy asked the priest whether what they did was a sin. The priest said that it was, but that was the way he was. Besides, the boy was also a perverted sinner, and should never tell anyone.

The boy grew up with this burden of guilt and psychological damage, until one day he decided to visit the priest, who was now elderly and in a hospice home waiting to die of lung cancer. (In addition to his other vices, the priest was a lifelong cigarette smoker.)

It was hard to hate the wreck of a man in that hospice bed. The desk clerk told him that he was the first visitor the dying priest had had in over a year. Although quite ill, the priest seemed quite lucid and aware of his surroundings. However, he had difficulty speaking because of the oxygen apparatus hooked up to his nostrils - and the fact that one of his lungs was already gone.

He stared at the priest and his hatred dissolved to pity.

“I forgive you, Father,” he said right before he injected the priest with an overdose of morphine.

Curtis Jerry Smothers More stories, essays, history, humor, poetry, and memoirs at www.cjsmothers.com