

# MY STORY OF FORGIVENESS

By: Donald H. Nohs

Brothers share message of forgiveness



Fr. Joseph (Pio) Nohs on the left and Donald H. Nohs on the right.  
Locked in an embrace of prayer of forgiveness before the image of  
Our Crucified Savior in His Holy Shroud

The story of a man faithful to Jesus' Holy Catholic Church his whole life.  
Sexually abused by a priest he loved and trusted.

Smack in the middle of the greatest scandal to rock the Roman Catholic Church.  
Hear Don's story of how he responded to a grace given by God to be able to forgive.

Hear in Don's own words what it is like to be sexually abused by a priest and yet  
have a brother who is a very good Roman Catholic priest, true to his priesthood.

Hear from Don's brother, Fr. Joe about what it is like to be a good priest and yet  
have a brother abused by a fellow Roman Catholic priest.

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## Acknowledgment

I would like to give thanks and acknowledge the following people:

My family:

\*Donald and Dolores, (my Mom and Dad)

\*My brothers and sisters; Debbie, Tommy, Brian, Gary, Joseph, Donna, Dolores, Johnny and Diana for their prayers and support.

\*A special acknowledgement to my children, Donald, Toni and Taylor.

\*To my wife Claudia, I have to thank her for her encouragement and support in everything that I do. I thank her for her understanding. Claudia, I thank you and I love you.

## Dedication

This book is dedicated first and foremost to  
God the Father and to God the Son and to God the Holy Spirit.

This book is also dedicated to any soul who has been wronged in life  
and finds it near impossible to forgive.

## Introduction

“I hope he rots in Hell!!!”

I hear this many times from people, good people, when I tell them my story of being sexually abused by a priest. People feel for me and this is how many people respond to make me feel better. People get confused when I say to them, “Please don’t say that.” When I tell people that I forgave this priest, many don’t understand. When I tell people that I made an act of reparation for this priest’s sake, many people charitably think that I am nuts. A good friend of mine, a devout practicing Catholic, after hearing about my act of reparation while attending my presentation on forgiveness, came up to me afterwards and said, “Gee, Don, why did you make an act of reparation? You did nothing wrong.” He’s right; I did absolutely no wrong. But forgiveness and reparation, to me, go far beyond that. It goes far beyond my not doing anything wrong. It is not a matter of my being right or wrong. It *is* a matter of being Christ like. I am called to forgive. Forgiveness and reparation are hard to understand if I stay self-centered. When I put Jesus in the center of my life, I do understand.

This book is very deep. I had to reach very deep inside myself to forgive. I believe that God is allowing things to happen in our lives to give us an opportunity to reflect on *Him*. I believe that God is asking us to take some time during our hectic daily routines, to stop and look deep inside ourselves and contemplate the state of our own souls, to see our souls as God would see them, if we were before Him right now. If I died today and stood before God, am I ready to be judged? I reflect on Matthew 6: 14,15: “If you forgive others their transgressions, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.” A loving yet harsh warning from Jesus. I pray the reader who reflects on his soul and sees a need to forgive, finds this book helpful. Forgiveness *is* hard, yes, but it also *is* necessary. I cannot tell anyone how to feel, I can only tell my story.

## My Story of Forgiveness

### My Childhood

I come from a family of ten children. I am one of six boys and four girls. I am the second oldest of the children. The house next to ours had ten children, and the house around the corner from us had ten children. There were plenty of kids around to play with every day. There was a woods behind our house where we would play every day. We would make forts in the woods, tree forts, and underground forts. We would ride bikes around town, have wagon races in the street and play tag football. My family was also very religious. After dinner we would go outside to play in the street. At about six o'clock routinely every night, my mother would come to the front door of the house and yell outside, "Debbie, Donald, Tommy, Brian, Gary, Donna, come inside, it is time for the Rosary." We prayed the Rosary every night as a family. Our neighbors' kids would also come in and join us for the Rosary. There were so many kids to say the Rosary that we used to add more prayers to the Rosary. Everyone had his or her own decade or special prayer. One brother or sister would say the prayer for the souls in Purgatory after every Our Father. Another brother or sister would recite the Jesus Prayer after every Fatima Prayer. Everyone had his or her own little prayer. Many of our friends learned the Rosary at our house. We would invite them to say a decade of the Rosary, and we would help them along if they didn't remember the prayer. My father would bless us all good night. He would also bless the house as he was walking out the front door to go to work every morning, and say a little prayer for his family.

Growing up, I was a normal child in every respect, except spiritually. At a very young age, I gave my life to Jesus. I said to Jesus, "Everything I have is Yours, my will, my personality, my identity, my life, my heart, my soul, everything I have is Yours to use for Your greater glory." I said to Jesus, "If You want me to live, then I will live for You; otherwise, take my life and You live in me." With my free will, I gave my will over to Jesus.

Looking back now, I would consider myself very spiritually mature at a very young age. I always felt very close to Jesus. I thought of Jesus all the time. I felt as if Jesus were actually a part of me. Every thought or decision in my mind I would include Jesus in the thinking process. I wanted to do everything for Jesus. I wanted to live for Jesus.

## My Guardian Angel

I always felt protected. I don't really know what I mean by this, but the best way to explain it is. One day I was playing with my neighbors. We were play fighting on the roof of a fort that we had built in their back yard. As we were playing, I fell off the roof. I remember seeing, as I was falling face down, that I was going to fall on top of a pile of wood that was lying on the ground with large nails sticking straight up. All of a sudden, I stopped falling and was turned around in mid-air and lowered to the ground and gently placed on the ground next to the pile of wood. The sensation was as if someone had caught me in midair and cradled me in his or her arms. I remember thinking to myself that I wanted to climb back up to the roof to jump off again because it felt so good to be lowered to the ground like that. Needless to say, I did not do that.

## A Brief Encounter with the Devil

At about nine years of age, I became an altar boy at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Copiague, New York, the town in which I grew up. I loved serving Mass. After the Altar Boy meetings every Saturday morning, I would go next door to the Church to pray or say the Stations of the Cross. I also used to stay and go into the Church to pray after catechism class when everybody was going home. Sometimes, I couldn't wait for catechism class to be over, so I could go into the Church to pray. I would pray for souls. I would say prayers and make little acts of reparation for the sins of the world. I was drawn to prayers of reparation, praying to Jesus to forgive the sins of the world. When I was riding with my parents and we would travel through other towns, if we passed a Church, I would say a little prayer: "God forgive anyone from this parish who might have offended You." Any cemetery we passed, I would ask God to bring a soul to Heaven from Purgatory. If a plane passed overhead, or if a busload of people passed by, I would pray for God to forgive anyone on that flight or bus who may have sinned against Him or offended Him. One morning after catechism class, while all the kids were hanging around outside the back door of the auditorium waiting for their parents to come pick them up, I overheard some boys cursing. I remember that I felt extremely hurt, not angry, but hurt. I looked up at the big silver cross that was on the roof, and I asked Jesus to forgive those boys for cursing in front of Him.

I believe the Devil did not like me being so prayerful and in love with Jesus at such a young age. The Devil did succeed in stopping me from praying in the Church after catechism class. One day, which I will never forget, after catechism I asked my brother and my neighbor to come in to the Church to pray with me. We went through the first set of doors. Now in this Church, when you went through the first set of doors, you came into a vestibule. You had another set of doors directly in front of you that led right into the Church itself. To the right was a door that led down to the Church hall. To the left was another door, which led up to the balcony. After we entered

the vestibule, before we entered the Church, the doorknob on the door to the right started turning and the door started banging as if someone wanted to come into the vestibule from downstairs. I tried to open the door to let in whoever was on the other side. The door was locked. The banging stopped. Just then the door to the left of the vestibule started banging and the doorknob turning violently back and forth, as if someone was desperately trying to enter. I did not think anything; it all happened so fast. I went to open this other door, but it too was locked. There was no one on the other side. I was now starting to get nervous. Then we turned to enter the Church; at this point we were not frightened but confused, trying to figure out why this happened. As we went to enter the Church, every door in the vestibule started banging and shaking violently back and forth at the same time. We did not have to try to figure things out logically any longer. Something was happening that was not natural. We became so frightened that at the same time we all darted out the front door of the Church. The result was that I never did go back into the Church to pray by myself ever again after catechism. I was too frightened to enter the Church again by myself to pray. The Devil did indeed stop me from praying in the Church after Catechism, but he did not stop me from praying.

## Dark Night of the Soul

First, let me start off by saying that I am no saint. Just ask any member of my family, and they will surely verify this. In fact, this would probably be the only issue on which we would completely agree. But sometime between the ages of 9 and 11, I believe I experienced what I later in life came to learn is termed the dark night of the soul. This experience lasted for about a week or two. The experience is very difficult to explain. It was a very horrible experience. Looking back on the experience, I would say that all at once I had a feeling that Jesus was no longer there, no longer a part of me. I know that when I sin, I pull myself from Jesus, but He is still there. This experience, however, was as if Jesus had pulled Himself from me, for no reason. I had a feeling of being totally abandoned by Him. I had physical pains in my stomach as if someone I was madly in love with just broke off a relationship with me. I would physically cry out for Jesus and say, "Jesus, where are You? Why did You leave me alone?" I was not expecting an audible answer, but a feeling. I would actually break out in a sweat, cry and double over with stomach cramps. All I could think about day and night was that Jesus had abandoned me, that I had loved Him so much, yet He just left. I could not even pray because He was not there. It was not that Jesus did not exist, but that He was not with me. This experience was not a loss of knowledge or a realization, but a horrible suffering both mental and physical. I would burn with fever, shake and cry. The pain would be in the pit of my stomach.

I wonder to myself now if this is what the souls in Purgatory experience. This episode actually brought me closer to Jesus. I appreciate Jesus in me, His being close. I don't ever want to lose that relationship. It is precisely because of this relationship that, never mind do I not want to sin, but I do not want even to offend Jesus, not because of the threat of hell, but I do not want to lose Jesus. If I do offend Jesus, or fall through sin, I don't desire to.

## Father Brice

When I was about eight years old, my family met Father Brice Ingelsby, a Passionist priest from the Immaculate Conception Monastery in Jamaica, New York. To me Father Brice was a very holy priest. Father Brice loved my family. One night, my brother Joseph was sleeping in my parents' bedroom. He woke up and came downstairs and told my mother, "Mom, Father Brice is upstairs in the bedroom; he is kneeling down praying in front of your Sacred Heart statue." At this time Father Brice was actually in his monastery back in Jamaica. Father Emmanuel a classmate and fellow Passionist priest of Father Brice's explained to my family that sometimes God allows unexplainable things to happen. Father Emmanuel told us that Father Brice loved my family very much and at that instant was very much rapt in prayer, praying for my family, and that God allowed my brother to see Father Brice's image in prayer as he prayed for us. Father Brice would visit my family often. He would take my family to the beach once in a while. He would have us kids make designs on the beach using the washed up seaweed. My brothers and I would go with my father every Friday night to the monastery to visit Father Brice and to help make Rosary beads. One night Father Brice said to me; "Donald, every day of your life say the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary." Now I was eight years old at this time, and my response was; "Gee Father, the whole mystery every day of my life for the rest of my life?" He said, "Well say the fifth decade, the Crucifixion." And I did. To this day I probably missed saying that decade maybe thirty times in all my fifty years. I would recite this decade in my mind at any time of the day or night. It did not matter where I was or what I was doing. I could be watching a movie; just walking down the street or sitting in a bar drinking and it would come to me to pray the Crucifixion.

When I was nine years old, Father Brice formed a club with all the kids. We formed the St. Dominic Savio Club and Father Brice appointed me president. My brothers, sisters, friends and I would go out and collect many bags of candy from all around town on Halloween. We would

sort out the lollipops and give them to Father to bring with him to Boys' Town so the children who had no home would have candy to eat.

St. Dominic Savio was very influential on me, spiritually, as a youth. I would make little sacrifices and acts of penance and offer them up to Jesus, like St. Dominic Savio. Instead of sleeping in my bed, I would sleep on the floor next to my bed. Sometimes I would sleep without a pillow or a blanket and offer it up to Jesus. I would also fast, sometimes go a whole day without anything to eat. I did this quite often when I was young, not to receive something I may have wanted, but I would offer up these little inconveniences to Jesus, for whatever He wanted to use them.

Father Brice died in 1964, at a very young age. He was only in his thirties. I was very upset, but I was very much honored because the other priests knew that Father Brice was close to me, so they asked me if I would like to be an altar boy at his funeral. My family traveled from Copiague, Long Island, New York, to New Jersey for the funeral. I carried the processional cross. I felt so honored to serve this priest's funeral. There were many people at this funeral, probably thousands. He touched many, many souls, and I was special to him. Father Brice started me on my journey united to the passion of Jesus.

## Father Emmanuel

After Father Brice's death, God put Father Emmanuel in my family's life. Father E was a classmate of Father Brice's and a fellow Passionist priest from Immaculate Conception Monastery in Jamaica, New York. Father Emmanuel stayed my spiritual advisor for the rest of my young life, and into my adulthood. It was Father Emmanuel who nurtured what Father Brice had instilled in me. I looked at Father Emmanuel as the perfect priest. I thought of Father Emmanuel and Father Brice as being on the same spiritual level, but as different types of priests. Father Brice was more the mystic. Father Emmanuel was the more intellectual who could study, explain and nurture the mystic. Father Emmanuel was always able to explain things to me as nobody else could. One day when I was about ten or eleven years old, I was upstairs sleeping in my parents' bedroom. They were downstairs talking with company. Something woke me up abruptly. I woke to see rays of light shooting out of the heart of the Sacred Heart statue on my parents' dresser. These rays filled the room and enveloped me in a bright light. I was scared. I did not scream, but my parents came running upstairs to see if I was all right. They said that the dog sleeping at the foot of the stairs jumped up and stood staring upstairs and that the dog's hair was standing on end. They knew that something was wrong. I looked around to see what could have caused this, but I came up with nothing. All the lights were out, the window shades were drawn. There were no headlights from passing cars, nothing. I knew that something unnatural had happened that was not natural. My parents took me to see Father Emmanuel. After discussing the incident and coming up with no logical explanation for this occurrence, Father then asked me about my reaction at the time. I told him that I was frightened. He told me that he was glad to hear that I was frightened. I asked him why he was glad to hear that I was frightened and not at peace if this was an event caused by God. He explained to me that; "to be frightened was a normal human reaction. God can give a soul graces, and the soul will know that it is from God, but that a normal human reaction initially to a supernatural event would be one of fright." He

told me that time would unfold the reason for the grace and not to get anxious about the event, but to pray and stay close to Jesus. After speaking with Father Emmanuel, I was at peace. Father was always able to explain the unexplainable and the supernatural. Father was always able to bring me peace and keep me solid in my faith.

## The Angel

God always allowed little graces in my life to let me know that He was close.

When I was in my early 20's, I was a conductor for the Long Island Rail Road. One of my runs was to take a train from Penn Station, New York to Hempstead, New York. I would pray the Rosary every day on the train. After we would pull into the station in Hempstead, the passengers would exit the train; I would check the cars and then exit the train myself. As I was walking down the station platform, I noticed a man bending over a garbage can shuffling and through it. From his appearance I took him to be homeless and probably hungry. I reached into my pocket and gave this man some money. This went on for about a week. Every day this man would be at the same garbage can at the same time when I would pull into the station. I would give him money every day. I noticed that he never looked up at me and never thanked me. He just put his hand out when I would pass by; I would put money in his hand; he would take it, stick it in his pocket and go back to shuffling through the garbage can. After about a week, I started thinking to myself, What am I doing? I'm giving this guy money every day; it is starting to become a nuisance. He never held his hand out to anyone else, and there were hundreds of passengers who would walk right past him every day as if he weren't even there. I thought about staying on the train to avoid him. A lot of thoughts ran through my head, Should I continue to give this guy money every day, or not? One day I had to go without lunch because I gave this guy the money I had set aside for my lunch. After much thought, I decided to give this guy money, even if it went on every day for years, even if I myself had to go without lunch every day. I would offer it up and give this guy money so he could eat. I got off the train and walked down the platform to the man. He put his hand out, I put money in his hand, he stuck it in his pocket, I turned to walk away. As I started to turn, he stood straight up, looked right at me and said, "Thank you." When he stood up, I saw that he was wearing a big green scapular around his neck and right in front of my face was the picture of the Blessed Mother on the scapular. Shivers

ran up and down my spine. I turned and started to walk away. As I was walking down the platform, I thought to myself, Maybe this was an angel. I turned around to talk to him, to ask him who he was, but he was gone, nowhere around, vanished, and I never saw him again.

Father Emmanuel would say, “Appreciate these little graces by God, thank God for them, and keep living your life a little closer to God fulfilling your state in life, whatever your state in life might be. If you are a husband or wife, strive to be a good husband or wife. If you are a father or mother, strive to be a good father or mother. Father Emmanuel kept me very well grounded.

Father Emmanuel had a special love for me, and I for him. Father would spend hours with me answering questions and explaining Jesus and the workings of God to me. There was one occasion that told me how much Father Emmanuel really cared for me. One day I had a problem, which caused a great emotional upset in my life. I was maybe 21 or 22 years of age. I called Father Emmanuel; he said to come right in to see him. He had just been transferred to New Jersey. He had become pastor of St. Michael’s Monastery in Union City, New Jersey. I never had to make an appointment with father. If I called with a problem, he would say, “Come right in.” I arrived at the monastery and went into his office. I was opening up to father explaining my problem. I was crying like a baby. After about 30 minutes another priest abruptly walked into the office. Father became very upset and scolded the priest, “Don’t you knock before you barge into a room?” I never saw Father Emmanuel that upset before. Later after leaving I realized that this priest loved me. He was so wrapped up in my problems at that time, so concerned for my physical, emotional and spiritual well being that he was totally absorbed in me. His total concentration was on my well-being. He wanted no distractions while he was listening to me. He loved and cared that much for me; all his focus was on me. Needless to say, when I left, I was at peace, I knew how I was going to handle my problem, and I was at peace. That was how Father affected me, the same way Jesus would. I listened to Father Emmanuel as I would listen to Jesus

Himself. In fact, that was what I had said to Jesus in my youth. “Jesus, You put Father Emmanuel in my life, and I am going to listen to him as a director as I would listen to You.”

On my part, I was always obedient to Father as my director. If Father suggested a book to read, I read it. If he suggested not reading a book, I did not read it. One day, when I was about 12 or 13 years of age, I told Father that I wanted to read the book *City of God* by St. Augustine. Long before this age I was already familiar with the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Merton, and many other deeply spiritual writers. I loved reading books on theology. Father thought that Augustine, however, was a little too deep for me at that time. I wanted to read it, but I did not. I listened to Father even if it went against what I felt was good for me. I was obedient.

And my obedience was put to the test.

## Mama Gili

When I was about 19 or 20 years old, I belonged to a Bible study group. A group of youths would get together once a week at a woman's home in Elmont, NY. Her name is Grace. We would pray, read passages from the Bible, and then discuss the passages just read. I was always able to explain the passages read.

One day after about three months of meetings, Grace called me at home. She asked if I could come over as she had something to tell me. After I arrived at her house, Grace told me that I had to leave the prayer group. I was dumbfounded, shocked and very hurt. I asked her why. She said that the spiritual director of the group said that the way I explain things was frightening the other members. I did not know what she meant. Then she also told me that there was a woman in New Jersey who wanted to meet me. Grace told me that this woman was a mystic and had a message from God for me. She told me the woman's name was Mama Gili. I told Grace that I would check with my spiritual director and get back to her. I went over things with Father Emmanuel. His eyebrows raised when he heard she was a mystic. But Father knew what I could handle spiritually and what I could not. I was familiar with many mystics by this age, genuine and not genuine. He told me to use my prudence, go see this woman, hear what she had to say and then come back to see him so we could discuss what was said. Before I called Grace back to set up a date I called a nun whom I knew very well. I was aware that this nun also knew Grace and that they spoke frequently. This is why I called this nun, to see if she could shed some light on what Grace had said. Her name was Sr. Marie Louis Bertrand, a Dominican nun from New Guilford, Connecticut. I looked at Sister Bertrand as being in a true mystical union with Jesus. I told Sister Bertrand that Grace said that I had to leave the prayer group, that I was frightening the other members. Sister said she knew all about the incident. She said, "Don't be upset or hurt because God had given you a gift." She called it a gift of inborn intuition, meaning that I have a deep inborn knowledge of God. Things pertaining to God are easy for me to understand, and that it

frightens the others because they don't understand, especially when I would talk about souls and salvation. Sister also said, "Go see Mama. I know Mama spiritually, and she does indeed have a message from God for you."

Everything now was set. I had checked with my spiritual director and checked out the story with Sister Bertrand. So I called Grace to set up the appointment to go meet Mama. I met Grace at her house on that day. There were two or three other women who took the ride to New Jersey with us to see Mama. Grace knew Mama well, would visit her often and bring others with her to meet Mama. When we arrived at Mama's house, we entered through the back door. Mama was sitting at her small kitchen table. Grace said hello to Mama and introduced me. Mama got right up and brought me into the living room. Mama then told Grace to take the other women who came with her and wait outside the house. I felt bad for these other women; I don't even know if Grace introduced them. They had come to see Mama, and Mama told them to wait outside. Mama then turned to me and said, "God wants me to show you something." She said, "I don't show to just anyone, only to those whom God wants me to." She brought me into another room. On the wall was a sort of cabinet with locked doors. Mama unlocked the cabinet and opened the doors. Inside the cabinet was a picture of the Holy Face of Jesus with blood dripping down the face. This picture of the Holy Face of Jesus was actually bleeding. Mama said, "I will leave you and Jesus alone for a while and come back later." I walked up to the picture to get a really close look, and there before my eyes was this picture of the Holy Face bleeding, right in front of me, a couple of inches away. It was the Face of Christ. I knelt down in front of the picture and began to pray to Jesus. Whether this picture was bleeding or not, I would have knelt before the picture of Jesus. I knew at a young age that the Church taught that it was okay to venerate holy images, that the veneration passed through the image to the person depicted in the image. I also knew that I was praying in front of something special, not your normal everyday picture of Jesus. I felt a closeness to Jesus in this image. I did not feel any extraordinary feelings. But I did feel an

unusual closeness to Jesus, as if He were actually a part of me, not standing next to me or in the room with me, but an actual part of me. This is the best way to describe my feelings while I was praying before this image.

After about 20 minutes, Mama quietly entered the room. She told me to follow her into the living room. She sat down on a chair; I sat down on a couch opposite her. There was now someone else in the room seated next to her, a priest. She introduced him as her son, Father Dante. Mama did not waste time; we had no conversation. Father Dante and I had no conversation other than to say, "Pleased to meet you." Mama immediately looked right at me into my eyes and said, "I have a message for you from God." I said to Mama, "So I hear." Mama again staring right into my eyes said, "God wants you to promote His Holy Shroud." I had indeed been studying the Shroud and the Passion of Jesus from a very young age. Mama then said, "And don't go to see Father Emmanuel anymore." I thought to myself, How does this woman know about Father Emmanuel? Then she said, "God wants Father Dante to be your spiritual director. God has many revelations for you through Father Dante. God wants Father Dante to bring you to a greater spiritual level. Don't ever see Father Emmanuel anymore, don't ever write to him, and don't ever communicate or call him anymore, ever." I glanced over at Father Dante hoping to hear something from him to make sense of this. He appeared to be a level-headed person. Father said, "Mama knows what she is talking about." Immediately I said, "I think that it is time for me to leave. As far as Father Emmanuel is concerned, he is my spiritual director. I am here under his spiritual direction, and I am indeed going to see Father Emmanuel." I could not believe it; here I was, a young kid, telling this mystic who had a message from God for me that I am going to see my spiritual director no matter what God says. I stood up and Father Dante called the women back into the house. Mama started crying; she was crying very much. As we walked by her to leave, she said, "Don't worry, you will do the right thing." I thought to myself at that moment, I know that I am doing the right thing. I am being obedient to

my spiritual director. I felt bad for the women as they never had a chance to speak or really visit with Mama.

Two weeks would pass before I was to see Father Emmanuel. For those two weeks, every day, I would break out suddenly into these fits of uncontrollable crying. I could not stop. These fits would come on suddenly and last for about 20 to 30 minutes. I would shiver and shake during these crying fits. Thoughts would come to my mind, You refused to do what God wants you to do, and I would question myself, Am I refusing to do God's will for me? I was so confused during this time I did not know where these thoughts were coming from. All my life, all I ever wanted to do was God's will for me. And now I thought I was refusing. This caused great emotional upheaval during these two weeks. I also came to the realization that this was exactly how Mama cried when I left her house, uncontrollably, just as I was doing. I felt at this moment that Mama and I were united in our crying. This was the only comfort or consolation that I had for two weeks. I never cried like that before in my life or since, and I will never forget it.

Father Emmanuel and I met and discussed the message Mama had given me. Father explained to me that first of all no one knows God's will for anyone else. But God can reveal things to people; He can give a message to someone for someone else, just as He did with the Apostle Paul. When Jesus appeared to Paul, He told Paul, "Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." (Acts 9:6). Jesus Himself did not tell Paul what He wanted him to do. Jesus revealed (in a vision) to another disciple, Ananias, what He wanted Paul to do. Jesus told Ananias to deliver a message to Paul. Mama might have been given a message by God for me, but did not necessarily know the reason for the message, or what it might mean. Also, Father explained that sometimes even genuine mystics could misinterpret messages. Father told me the classical example of a mystic misinterpreting a message was St. Francis. Jesus, in a vision told St. Francis, "Francis, repair my Church." Francis immediately set out to raise money and got the

townspeople together and started repairing the Church in town. It was not until sometime later that Jesus revealed to Francis that, he misunderstood what Jesus wanted him to do. Jesus said, “No Francis, that’s not what I meant. I meant repair my Church” interiorly, within each of us, and not the physical structure in town. So, here you have a bona fide, genuine Church-approved mystic, misinterpreting a message from Jesus. Did this make Francis not a genuine mystic? No, of course not, but he misunderstood. Mama told me just what God wanted her to tell me even though she knew I became disturbed. Mama said what she had to say. No more, no less. She cried.

Father Emmanuel said to be at peace and that time would reveal the meaning of the message, if it is indeed from God.

Father was right on the money again. I was at peace. I look back now at 50 years of age, and I think to myself, Did Mama have a message from God for me? Yes, I am indeed giving presentations on the Passion and Burial Shroud of Jesus. I have been for years. I go to different parishes and organizations and speak on the Burial Shroud of Jesus, the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus (the devotion born out of the Shroud), and on forgiveness. I have been studying and contemplating the Passion and the Shroud of Jesus since childhood. I am a director of the Society of the Holy Face of Jesus, an organization which promotes devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus through Holy Hours of Reparation.

I look back at Mama’s life. Mama fulfilled her state in life admirably. Mama stayed with Jesus her whole life. Her husband died early in their marriage. She raised five children herself; she held down two jobs to make ends meet while raising her children. She became very ill, but she offered up her sufferings (which were great, double amputee, and diabetic) to Jesus. She suffered with a smile. She saved many priestly and religious vocations; she was on fire with zeal to promote the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus. Mama was in a true mystical union with Jesus. A committee has been formed (Mama Gili Guild) to investigate the life of Mama and to

gather information to open a cause for her beatification, and I am proud to be part of that committee.

## St. Padre Pio

Padre Pio was another priest who was, and is, very close to my family. Padre Pio accepted my whole family as his spiritual children. We would speak to Padre Pio over the phone through his interpreter. He accepted us as his spiritual children himself. Padre Pio would make himself known (spiritually) often in my home. I knew very well the fragrance of Padre Pio. What I loved and admired most about Padre Pio was his humility and his understanding of the joy of suffering in a special way for the sins of the world, united with Jesus. I knew all about Padre Pio at a young age. When I was 15 or 16 years of age, I used travel go with a man (Joey L.) from Lindenhurst, New York who was healed by Padre Pio of his sense of smell. We would go to people's homes and churches and show slide presentations on Our Lady of Garabandal, Our Lady of Fatima, and Padre Pio.

Jesus used me to spread the awareness of Padre Pio without my even knowing it. Joey L. was a good friend of my family. His first presentation was in my family's home. He would visit Padre Pio often. When he would come back to the states, he would visit my family and give my mother relics of Padre Pio. We also knew some seminarians from the states who would go to Italy and serve as altar boys for Padre Pio's Mass. They would come back and give my mother cotton swabs with Padre Pio's blood on it. They would clean the blood off the altar after Mass with these cotton swabs and give some to my mother. My mother kept all her relics in a reliquary that my father made for her. Every once in a while, I would raid my mother's reliquary. I would tell all of my friends (girl friends included) about Padre Pio, the priest who one day would be a saint. I would give out any relics that I had, all of them I should say. I gave out all of my mother's relics. My mother always knew that I was the one who took her cherished relics of Padre Pio. My mother had ten children, but she would come to me and say; "Donald, did you take my relics again? There are none left." She would ask this question a little louder than you

are reading it here, much louder. And of course I had to be honest. But it wasn't just the relics that I took. I also took any books on Padre Pio that she had. She knew that also.

Jesus did let me know one day the effect of this. One day I was giving a presentation on the Shroud of Jesus at Our Lady of the Island Shrine in Eastport, New York. A friend of mine (Doris from Amityville, NY) who attended the presentation came up to me and said, "Donald, do you remember when you were a teenager that you gave a book on Padre Pio to Mary?" I said, "Yes, I do remember." I was maybe 16 or 17 years old, so this was about 35 years ago. Doris then said, "Did you know that after reading about Padre Pio, her life was changed? The book that you gave her so long ago changed her whole future life." I said, "No, I did not know that." That was heavy, I said to myself, "Jesus, thank You for the grace to let me know that."

Anything I ever had from Padre Pio did not stay in my possession for very long. The Padre Pio relics would be given out by me as fast as they came into our house. That still holds true for today. Recently I was speaking to another good friend of mine (Anthony F., from Seaford, New York) who was healed of cancer through the intercession of Padre Pio. Anthony knew I was close to Padre Pio. He gave me a Rosary and said, "Donald, this is for you. This Rosary was blessed by Padre Pio." I thanked Anthony and his wife Barbara. I finally had something from Padre Pio that I could hold on to. The very next night I was at the home of another good friend of mine (Josephine Sansalone, of Babylon, New York) who has a Holy Face prayer room attached to her house. We pray our Holy Hour of Reparation here every Friday night. In her prayer room, she also has a statue of Padre Pio. I was sitting in the first row of seats. As we were about to start the Rosary, a woman who was sitting directly behind me was looking at the Padre Pio statue and said, "I wish I had something of Padre Pio's that I could bring to my mother who is in the hospital dying from cancer." I thought to myself, I don't believe it. The good Padre had this woman sit right behind me so I could overhear her plea. I turned around to the woman and said, "Take these rosaries; they are from Padre Pio for you to pray for your mother." I never saw this

woman again. But that's how it goes with me and my spiritual father St. Padre Pio. At least the Rosary was in my possession for one whole day, and I was able to make the sign of the cross with it.

## Father Joseph Nohs

Yes, this priest has the same last name as mine. You guessed it. He is my brother. My mother had ten children. You know that there had to be one priest in the family. Little Joefish grew up to become a priest for Jesus. He is a very good and awesome priest in the Diocese of Rockville Centre in New York. Just ask any one of the parishioners at St. Raphael's Parish in East Meadow or Maria Regina Parish in Seaford, New York. I always prayed for priests and religious, and also for seminarians. While my brother was attending seminary preparing for the priesthood, my brother Brian and I twice a year would cook a big meal (a feast) for my brother Joe and all his fellow seminarians. We did this for a number of years, once in the spring, when the guys would get out of the seminary for vacation and once in the fall before the guys would return to the seminary. The only charge for the meals was that after dinner, for one hour, we would talk about Jesus, the Church and the priesthood. That was the only price of admission. Then they could kick back and relax. I made the sauce and macaroni, and my brother Brian made the seafood (shrimp and lobster). These guys had a real feast, and I know they loved and appreciated what we did for them. My brother Joe is a wonderful priest, and I will mention more of him (much more) later in the book.

## Father J

Another priest who became a friend of my family is Father J. My family met Father J at the funeral of Father Brice's. At the funeral, I had carried the processional cross. After the funeral, Father J came up to my family and introduced himself. Father J looked at me and said, "You are going to be a priest when you grow up; I can tell by the way you look at Jesus on the cross when you carry it that you love Jesus very much. Father J became a good family friend. He would visit our family and stay at our house for the weekend. Father J also became friendly with many of my family's friends. He was very charismatic. He was also a healer. If someone weren't feeling well, he would have that person lie down; he would take his hands and make "passes" over his or her body starting at the tip of the head and ending at the feet. He would then close his hand, bring his hand to the top of the person's head, open his hand and make a pass over the body down to the feet again. His hand would be about six inches over the body as he made these passes. He did this for about 15 minutes, and the person would actually start to feel better.

Father J was also very psychic. He would play these psychic games with us. He would give us an object to hide, such as a crucifix; he would then go into another room in the house. One of us would take the object and hide it somewhere. Father J would come back in the room when we called him; he would take one of us, hold one of our arms out with him holding the arm at the wrist; move about the room with the person and then locate the hidden object. He was very accurate. He said that he was able to feel the object through our hands.

One night Father J was sitting on our living room couch. He told us that our grandmother (my mother's mother) was going to arrive shortly. My mother said that she was not coming over. Father J said "Yes, she is" and asked for a pencil and paper. We gave him a pencil and paper; he drew this old woman with a long green overcoat and a funny top hat. My mother said to Father J, "That is not my mother; my mother would never dress like that." Now you have to know my grandmother. Miss Prim and Proper, she would never dress like that. My grandmother always

dressed properly, like a businesswoman. Within five minutes of Father J drawing my grandmother; the doorbell rang. In walked my grandmother looking just as Father J had drawn her, wearing a long green overcoat and a funny top hat. We could not believe it. My grandmother would not be caught dead looking like that and here she was looking just like the picture. She said she wore that old coat and hat as a joke because she happened to find them packed away in storage.

Father J would always talk about the Blessed Mother. We would all say the Rosary, and then he would talk about Mary for hours. I felt very blessed to know this priest. People would come from all over to see this priest, and here he was right in my home. Different people would come to our house to speak with Father, hoping through him to get messages and miracles from Heaven.

When it got late and it was time for bed, we would have what Father called a campout. We would get all the boys, my brothers, the neighbor's son and me. We would put all the mattresses from the beds on the floor, tell stories and then all go to sleep just as if we were all camping out. At that time we ranged in age from 9 to 12. We were very imaginative and had no problem making believe that we were camping out.

The following morning, we would have breakfast, pray more, have more talks and then Father would have to leave, usually after lunch. Many called Father J a miracle worker. Father J would visit my home about once a month. After about a year, he stopped coming around. I do not know what happened to him.

## The Tests

As I reflect on my life, I see that there was a series of tests which I believe were given by God to prepare or condition me for something (not that God keeps a scorecard every minute of my life. Because if my brief encounter with the devil was a test of bravery, I failed miserably). What that something is, that I believe God is preparing me for, I don't fully know. I do believe, however, that whatever it is God is preparing me for is unfolding in my life now. I always felt protected by God. I always felt close to God. I see my encounter with the angel as a test of compassion and charity. When Doris told me how Mary's life was changed when I gave her the book on Padre Pio, I realized that I was also compassionate and charitable for souls, not just for the person on a physical level. I was concerned for his or her soul. The encounter with Mama Gili, I see now that God was testing me again, a test of obedience. There were two messages from God through Mama. The first, "God wants you to promote His Holy Shroud," was a true prophetic statement. I do believe that this is part of God's Will for me. I am confident of this. The presentations on the Passion, The Shroud and the Holy Face devotion bear much good fruit, which I will write about in later chapters. This is definitely the work of the Holy Spirit. The second message, "God has many revelations for you. God wants to bring you to a very great spiritual level. Don't ever talk to Father Emmanuel again," was very troubling. I was there under the guidance of Father Emmanuel, the priest who had been with me and guided me most of my life, the priest who knew me inside out. Father Emmanuel dealt with many mystics (true and false) during his priestly career. I thought to myself, I told you, God, that I would listen to Father Emmanuel as I would listen to You. I truly believe that You gave me Father Emmanuel to guide me, and that You speak through him. And here was this woman telling me, "God wants you never to talk to Father Emmanuel again." This caused such an emotional upheaval in my life physically and spiritually. Inside of me I truly desired to be a saint. It was being handed to me on a silver platter. The only thing I had to do was never to talk to Father Emmanuel again. With my

free will, I chose to be obedient to my spiritual director. The minute I got home, I called Father Emmanuel and made an appointment to come see him. This test caused much upheaval within me for two weeks. I did make the decision to be obedient that day. I left that day never to see Mama again. But my meeting with Father wasn't going to be for another two weeks. For two weeks I cried uncontrollably still questioning myself. After I spoke to Father Emmanuel, I was at peace. Mama did indeed tell me what God had revealed to her for me. The first message came true. The second message neither Mama nor myself at that time knew was a true test of obedience. I never did see Mama again, on earth anyway. Mama's spirit is always with me. I pray to Mama for her intercession for the work of Reparation through the Devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus. God did allow me to know that Mama is indeed with me.

These were some of the tests in my life that I believe were given by God. I passed them, with difficulty, but I ended up always knowing and enjoying the peace of Christ. However, my greatest test was yet to reveal itself. God allowed something to take place in my life that when it was revealed to me would rock my spiritual life. A test that would shake the very Faith I had believed in and stayed with my entire life.

## The Day the Earth Stood Still

The year was 1999. I was 46 years old. I was home alone one night watching television. I was flicking through the channels but could not find anything interesting. I decided to watch my local diocesan religious television station (Telecare & EWTN). On the station there was a documentary showing. As I was watching the show, the narrator interviewed a priest. The priest seemed familiar to me. Then the name of the priest flashed on the screen. It was who I thought it was. It was Father J. I hadn't seen him in over 34 years. I was studying the way he appeared now, much older, but still recognizable. As I was concentrating on him and thinking back about when he used to visit my family, the good thoughts that I was thinking, in a flash, took a drastic turn and became a nightmare. It is a good thing that nobody was home at the time because all at once the whole world came to a standstill as I came to a realization and said out loud, "Father J.S. molested me. Father J sexually molested me when I was young." I started remembering different episodes from when he used to visit. It was just like watching a movie. Different snippets would enter my mind at different times. I didn't remember everything at once, but over a short period of time, everything became crystal clear. I am not going to go into detail, but suffice it to say that these were horribly sick memories. Child sexual molestation is a horrible event. I didn't know what to do or think. All I knew was that this priest, whom I had looked up to as a miracle worker, violated me. I was just a kid, 12 years old, and I loved priests. I loved all the priests who used to visit my family. I still could not believe it. I thought to myself, Priests just don't do those things. This revelation caused much confusion in my life. I thought to myself, Were all the other priests the same? Worse yet, I thought to myself I have a brother whom I thought was a wonderful Catholic priest, who I always prayed would be a good priest. Is he like that? I was bombarding myself with unanswerable questions. I reported the incident to my diocese. I received no help whatsoever. I am not going to point fingers or compare administrations. That is not the reason for writing this book. This happened before my current

bishop (Bishop William Murphy) was installed as shepherd of this diocese. Bishop Murphy was indeed concerned for me as a victim, and responded admirably. As I said, prior to bishop Murphy, I received no help or concern for me as a victim. I felt rejected and unloved by the Church that I loved so much. I started hearing and reading about other victims of priestly sexual abuse, within my diocese and outside of my diocese. I had no clue that this was just the beginning of the greatest scandal to rock the whole universal Catholic Church. Everyday I would read about another breaking case of abuse. I could not believe the extent of what was unfolding. I thought that I was one of not-too-many priestly sexual abuse victims. I was wrong, dead wrong. Victims were coming out of the woodwork. Many priestly sexual abuse victim support organizations started popping up all over the place. I would read about victims who were suing the different priests and dioceses for millions of dollars. All these organizations were offering attorneys to help victims sue. I started hearing different organizations call for the cardinals and bishops to step down. Some even called for the Holy Father to step down. I started hearing calls for change in the Church. Many other agendas crept their way into the abuse scandal. I was very tempted and justified to sue for millions of dollars. Very tempted, but, Jesus Himself was calling me in another direction.

I said to Jesus, “Jesus, You be my guide. With my free will, I will stay with You, Your Church and with the Holy Father who was put here by the Holy Spirit to guide us.” I knew that God would not desert His people. From Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses to Jesus and every Pope since Peter, God gives us someone to lead His people. I would stay faithful to the Holy Father and pray for guidance. And guidance I received. As I said before, Jesus was calling me in another direction. But it was not a direction that I had ever thought about going in.

## Will You Forgive Him?

For many years now, I have been giving presentations on the Passion of Jesus as revealed through His burial cloths, the Holy Shroud and the Holy Sudarium. I have life-size replicas of the Shroud and Sudarium, which I bring with me everywhere I go. I also have replicas of the instruments of the crucifixion, the flagrum, nails, spear, crown etc. In 1996, I became a director in the Society of the Holy Face of Jesus, Mama Gili Guild. The Society of the Holy Face of Jesus is an organization, which was formed to spread the devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus through Holy Hours of Reparation. The Mama Gili Guild is an organization, formed primarily to investigate the life of Dolores ‘Mama’ Gili (the woman who told me when I was young that God wanted me to promote His Holy Shroud). The Committee was formed (with the permission of, archbishop Theodore Mc Carrick of Newark, New Jersey) by Father Dante Di Girolamo (Mama’s spiritually adopted son). I was appointed by Father Dante to serve on that committee and also as a director for the Society of the Holy Face of Jesus.

Every night, I pray my own private Holy Hour of Reparation before my image of the Holy Face of Jesus. The same image that is open before me as I write this book.

One night as I prayed my Holy Hour, just before the prayer of reparation, I started thinking about myself, how I was abused. I was thinking about Father J. I was becoming very angry. I did not want to get angry during my Holy Hour, but I did. I could not pray that prayer of reparation, not just yet. Every thought of anger and confusion was filling my brain, right at that time. A rage was building up inside of me. I reached such a point that I actually lashed out at Jesus, right at the image of the Holy Face which has always been with me. I complained to Jesus about my situation. I said, “Jesus, Father J abused me. Jesus, I was always faithful to You, and one of Your priests sexually abused me. How could You let this happen to me?” I started to cry. I was feeling hurt and betrayed. Just as my justifiable anger reached its peak, Jesus spoke to me. Now, when I

say that Jesus spoke to me, I do not mean audibly, but Jesus did indeed speak to my heart. Right then and there in front of His Holy Face, just as I was feeling good and angry, Jesus said, “Donald, will you forgive him?” I could not believe what I felt in my heart and mind. I said, “Jesus, one of Your priests sexually abused me. I was only 12 years old. I am angry”. Again Jesus said: “Donald, will you forgive him.” For the third time I complained to Jesus, I said: “Jesus, I was always Your faithful servant, I am justified in feeling angry, very angry. And You ask me to forgive?” And Jesus said, “Donald, Faithful servant, not only do I ask if you will forgive him, but will you make an act of reparation to me for him, if need be, for the salvation of his soul?” The world around me stood still for about five minutes as I contemplated what Jesus wanted me to do. There was dead silence. I did not think any more angry thoughts. My only thought was, will I forgive? After a couple of minutes I said to myself, “All right, tough guy, you think you are a practicing Catholic, you call yourself a disciple of Jesus, you receive the physical Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist often, so what are you going to do?” I thought to myself, As a Catholic and a disciple, I know I am called to forgive. But it is hard. Then I thought about Jesus in the Eucharist, that in the Eucharist I am in such an intimate communion with my God, that God shares in my humanity and actually in a very real way lets me share in His divinity. I thought like St. Paul when he said, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me.” If I truly, truly want to be *really* Christ-like, then I really don’t have any other options. I said, “Yes, Yes, Jesus, I will forgive Father J for what he did to me.” What I mean by forgiveness is this: The priest who abused me has no idea that I forgave him or made an act of reparation for his sake. I don’t believe reconciliation is possible and is not important. What I did was between God and me. I said, “Jesus, please, do not hold what Father J did to me against his soul. And please, Jesus, accept this act of reparation from me for his sake.” Right then and there, before my image of the Holy Face of Jesus, I prostrated myself on my basement floor, and with my tongue I licked the concrete floor of my basement as an act of reparation. As I did this, I

immediately thought of Holy Mass. I mentally pictured taking my episode of sexual abuse, my act of forgiveness and my act of reparation and placing them right there on the offertory plate in the hands of the priest and offered them up to God the Father in union with the offering of the unbloody sacrifice of Jesus. Jesus' offering and my offering, together, on the same plate. At this moment, I felt so united to Jesus. When I got up, I sat back down before the Holy Face and started crying like a baby. I cannot describe the peace and warmth that I felt. The closeness to Jesus that I always enjoyed was intensified a hundredfold, a feeling that has never left me. I sat in my chair, limp. I could not move a muscle. After a few minutes an indescribable peace came over me, as if every burden that ever lay on my soul was being gently taken away. I just sat there staring at the Holy Face of Jesus right in front of me.

After a little while of contemplating the Face of Christ, I thought to myself, Jesus died for this priest's sake just as much as He died for my sake. I felt in my heart that Jesus was thanking me for responding to what I felt He had asked me to do. I thanked God for giving me the grace to be able to forgive.

I believe that because I freely decided to act upon the grace and forgive from my heart, that God allowed the grace to blossom in me, thereby enabling me to make an act of reparation for the sake of my fellow man. Because I love Jesus, I love my fellow man.

In case you are wondering what reparation is and why I made an act or reparation, I will try to explain my actions. Technically, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, reparation is a theological concept closely connected with those of atonement and satisfaction, and thus belonging to some of the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith. It is the teaching of that faith that man is a creature who has fallen from the original state of justice in which he was created, and that through the Incarnation, Passion and Death of the Son of God, he has been redeemed and restored again in a certain degree to the original condition. Although God might have condoned men's offenses gratuitously if He had chosen to do so, yet in His Divine Providence,

He did not do this. He judged it better to demand satisfaction for the injuries which man had done Him. It is better for man's education that wrongdoing on his part should entail the necessity of making satisfaction. The Sufferings, Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, made man for us, made this satisfaction adequately to God. By voluntary submission to His Passion and Death on the Cross, Jesus Christ atoned for our disobedience and sin. He thus made reparation to the offended Majesty of God for the outrages, which the Creator so constantly suffers, at the hands of His creatures. We are restored to grace through the merits of Christ's death, and that grace enables us to add our prayers, labors and trials to those of our Lord "and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ" (Col. I: 24). We can thus make some sort of reparation to the justice of God for our own offenses against Him, and by virtue of the Communion of Saints, the oneness and solidarity of the Mystical Body of Christ, we can also make satisfaction and reparation for the sins of others.

Now, since I am far from being an educated theologian, let me explain plainly so that I will be able to understand myself what I just wrote. That which I just wrote above, technically is what reparation is all about, the why and the effect of making reparation. What is key to me is in understanding that by virtue of the Communion of Saints and the oneness and solidarity of the Mystical Body of Christ, I can make satisfaction and reparation for the sins of others. The question for me is, Why would I? Why would I want to make reparation for someone else, especially one who offended me? Well, quite frankly, simply because God called me to make an act of reparation. God called me to forgive, and God called me to make an act of reparation. I say God called me because I realize that reparation is not something I am capable of doing on my own. My act of reparation was a response to a grace given by God. God gave the grace; I recognized it, welcomed it, and responded to it. I cooperated with the grace of God. This grace influenced me to respond to the love manifested for me by Jesus. I desired to return love to the one who loved me first. This is why I can say I was drawn or *called* to make an act of reparation.

God gave me an opportunity to be like His Son, Jesus, to be truly Christ-like. I realize that God *calls* me to holiness, I am *called* by God to forgive, I am *called* by God to make reparation, I am *called* by God to live my Catholic faith. In my life, Jesus is the example. Jesus is the center of my life.

## The Presentation

I have been giving presentations on the Passion of Jesus as revealed in His Holy Shroud for quite a few years now. I believe the Holy Shroud reveals to us what man is capable of doing to his fellow man. Jesus reveals to us in His Holy Shroud what He endured in His passion (our Savior, our God become man) to save us from our sin. And, after we nailed Him to a cross, our God forgave us. I believe the Shroud speaks to us of forgiveness, the Passion speaks to us of forgiveness, and the Church speaks to us of forgiveness. I believe that our redemption is based on forgiveness. I believe the healing process begins with forgiveness. I believe that I am called to forgive. After contemplating these things, I felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to incorporate my story of forgiveness into the presentations that I give on the Passion of Jesus.

On March 20, 2004 I gave a special presentation at Our Lady of the Island Shrine in Eastport, New York. At this particular presentation I was going to speak on the Passion of Jesus, the sex abuse scandal and my story of forgiveness. I asked my brother, Father Joe, to speak at this presentation with me because I realized through the Holy Spirit that there was a lot more to this scandal. What about the good priests? The majority of priests are good priests true to their priesthood. They suffered through this scandal also. Here I was a victim, sexually abused by a Roman Catholic priest, yet I have a brother who is a very good and wonderful Roman Catholic priest, true to his priesthood. The other side to this is that a wonderful Roman Catholic priest has a brother who was sexually abused by a fellow Roman Catholic priest. My brother as a priest experienced anger, frustration, and hurt. Priest and victim, brothers, coming from one family. A crummy situation, true. Yet, a unique situation. A situation formulated by the providence of the Divine Will of God. I pray that my brother can forgive his fellow priests.

We began the presentation locked in an embrace of prayer and forgiveness. We prayed for the Holy Spirit to guide us for everyone's sake. As I was giving my testimony, I glanced over at my

brother who was sitting on the side of the altar. I thought I saw a few tears running down his cheeks. After I gave my testimony, I asked my brother, to speak. On his way up to take the microphone, he paused to give me another hug. I knew that it was tough for him to start speaking after hearing my testimony as he sat on the side of the altar wearing his priestly collar, listening to how I was abused by a priest. But he did it for me, his brother. He did it for Jesus. After he took a moment to gather himself, he began speaking about his own experience of being a priest caught up in the middle of this scandal of knowing and being friendly with fellow priests who ended up being abusers of children. And in particular, of having a brother who always prayed for and supported priests, being abused by one of his fellow priests.

Father Joe began, “Forgive me for talking about me. We all know who the real victims are (alluding to the victims of sexual abuse). When I first heard about my brother’s abuse, I have to admit there was a kernel of doubt in my head. This was before the sexual abuse cases were widely publicized, and in my heart, I rejected the idea (at first) that a priest could be capable of this. I thought to myself, I know priests. Priests don’t do this. *Right?* But I also knew my older brother. After all, we had grown up together part of a large Catholic family of ten children. At nine years of age, my brother Donald was president of the St. Dominic Savio club. On Halloween, he would get all the children around town to donate all of the lollipops that were collected to Boys’ Town. He would stay after Mass and catechism just to pray in the Church. He was an altar boy. He loved priests and encouraged vocations with the seminarians. He loved Jesus and he loved the Church. After contemplating all this and coming to grips with the truth of what happened to my brother I felt that our whole family had been violated.

“In the following years, as the sexual abuse cases began to unfold I felt like crawling under a rock. Every time I opened a newspaper, it was as if another nail had been pounded into my heart. It was like being crucified every day.

“One day, after praying with a dying man, I recalled feeling honored to be a priest. But as I drove home, I spotted about ten teenagers who started shouting obscenities at me because of this collar. I wanted to scream, *“Not all of us are like that!”*”

“After one news report, I became venomously angry. I discovered that a fellow classmate of mine at the seminary abused teenagers at a parish that I had served in. That particular priest had taken my place at that parish after my transfer. Besides being angry, I was hurt, and this was personal. He was abusing children who belonged to the youth group that I had built up.

“How come I couldn’t see that this brother priest was an abuser?”

“Although I know that evil takes on many disguises, even one of Jesus’ own apostles’ betrayed Him, I feel that I should have been able to know what that priest was capable of.

“Now, I feel as if God is calling me to go see this priest, but I am afraid of what I might do. I am called to forgive, but I am not ready yet.

“The kids from the youth group called me to tell me what happened. One kid from the group asked, ‘Father, are you like that too?’ After I heard that, did I want to take this collar off and run and hide? Yes!

“Like the apostles who fled during and after Jesus’ crucifixion, I’ve been hiding in the upper room. This is the first time that I am speaking publicly about my experience as a priest with the sexual abuse scandals. This is my Pentecost.

“We need your help to pull us priests out of hiding. We need your forgiveness for our silence and your prayers. I thank my brother and the parishioners of Maria Regina Parish in Seaford, New York for encouraging me to continue in my vocation even when I didn’t think that I could. I thank you for that.”

When my brother was finished speaking, I gave him a hug. Right there on the platform were two brothers hugging, one a priest, the other a victim, together, praying that the world responds

to the grace which is available to be able to forgive. Both of us are each other's greatest supporters in our particular apostolate.

After the presentation, my brother and I were sitting in our car in the parking lot reflecting on everything. I expressed disappointment. There were about a hundred people in attendance. There were no clergy. I told my brother that I had sent emails to almost every pastor in almost every parish in the diocese, inviting them to hear this story of forgiveness. Not one priest showed up. I had also invited members and victims from all the organizations who claim to represent victims to hear a story of forgiveness. One organization actually wanted to promote this presentation. No one showed. I also invited the media. Some local newspaper and television reporters expressed interest in attending. None showed. The only reporter in attendance was Lena Penino from *The Long Island Catholic*, our local diocesan newspaper. I told my brother that I could not believe that no one was interested in hearing a victim's story of forgiveness.

## The Fruit of the Story

For a couple of weeks following this special presentation, I have to say, I was very discouraged. I really felt *called* to tell my story of abuse and forgiveness. I called out to Jesus and said, “Well, Jesus, I did what I thought You wanted me to do. I told my story, and it was all for nothing.” Or so I thought. Every thought I think, every action I take, I go over with Jesus. I talk to Jesus all the time. I even complain to Jesus, and every time I complain, I end up putting my big foot in my mouth. And this time was no exception. After a couple of weeks of reveling in my discouragement, my wife said, “Don, your brother Joe called, and he has something to share with you when he sees you at your mother’s on Easter. On Easter day, my whole family was at my mother’s house. The house was bursting at the seams. My mother cooked three turkeys. Anyway, when I was finally able to get my brother Father Joe alone, I asked him to take a ride with me to get two boxes of Joe (for those of you who do not come from a large family, a Box of Joe is literally a box which holds 10 cups of coffee from Dunkin Donuts). While we were in the car I said, “Claudia told me that you had something to tell me.” He said, “Yes, I do. I know you were disappointed with the presentation, so I wanted to tell you what happened to me the other day.” At first I thought that I had done something wrong. I thought maybe the Bishop had grabbed my brother and complained about our doing the presentation. I said, “Well, what happened?” He said, “Thursday, just before the Chrism Mass at St. Agnes Cathedral about 30 priests came up to me, hugged me and told me to please thank my brother. They said they are praying for you and our entire family and to tell you to keep doing what you are doing. One deacon came up to me crying. They read the article about the presentation in *The Long Island Catholic*.” I thought to myself, How good God is to me, to give me the grace to know the effect of the presentation, how it did indeed touch and move people. I am constantly humbled by God every time I put my foot in my mouth, and I thank Him for that.

And the effect did not stop there. People were coming up to me and actually thanking me for speaking on forgiveness. Lay people, priests and religious were calling my brother telling him to thank me. One night I was telling my story to a prayer group. There were about 30 people in the group. There was also a priest present. After the meeting, I drove the priest back to his parish. On the way we spoke about the Church and the scandal. When we arrived at the parish, just before he went into the rectory, he said, “You know, Don, I saw that the people were listening to your story and all were moved. I have to tell you, I was sexually abused when I was young, and I cannot tell anyone. No one cares to hear a story of sexual abuse from a priest. I am a good priest and I was abused, but it does not matter. I am a priest, so no one wants to hear about it. But you keep on doing what you are doing. I see how the people react; you are doing God’s will.” I said to this priest, “Father, yes, you are a good priest, and keep on being a good priest. You did indeed tell someone your story and this person did indeed listen and does care. Ironically, the person you told is a victim. This victim will pray for you. And as you told me to keep doing what I am doing, that I am doing God’s will, so I also say to you, keep being a good priest. You also are doing God’s will.”

Another result of that first presentation is *this book*. My writing this book is a direct result of that presentation. One day I received a phone call from a woman, Babbette Douglas, While I was at work in my office. When I answered the phone, Babbette said, “Hello, Donald, you don’t know me, but I attended your presentation on forgiveness, and I must tell you that I was deeply moved. I wonder if I might be able to meet you so we can talk.” I said, “Sure.” We made a date to meet for lunch at the Sayville diner. When we met for lunch, we both sat at the table and Babbette said, “I want to thank you for meeting me. I don’t know why I am here or what I am doing. I feel very awkward. After all, you don’t even know me, but I felt compelled to meet you. I want to tell you that I was very much moved by your presentation. The world needs to hear this message of forgiveness. Tell me, what are you doing to get the message out to the world?” I told

her that I give presentations on the Passion of Jesus, but not so much on my story of forgiveness. I mentioned to her that for the past three or four years a number of people have asked me to write a book. My oldest daughter Toni one day out of the clear blue said, “Dad, I have to tell you that you should write a book so more people can hear this story.” That, coming from my daughter, was always in my heart, but I could not write, I don’t know how to write a book, and I wouldn’t know where to begin. Babbette said, “Oh, now I know why I am here.” I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “Well, I am an author, and you *are* going to write that book. In fact, you are going to write a number of books, and I am going to help you. I am actually getting goose bumps. I knew I was here for a reason.” That was all I needed to hear. I said, “Okay, Holy Spirit, You put this meeting together. I will do whatever You want.” My writing this book would not have been possible without the guidance of Babbette. Immediately after I told her that I had no clue on how to write a book, she told me what I must do and how to start writing. When I would become lax in writing, she would call just at that time and say, “Don, how is that book coming? We need that book.” Even at work, I had much encouragement, every day. Ray, the guy who brings in the mail would stop by my office, look in and say, “Don, so how’s the book coming? You better get moving.” Michelle and Donna would stop by my office during lunch and ask how the book was coming and tell me to get moving. They have no idea how much they did indeed encourage me.

The following is a testimonial that I received from a woman who attended the presentation:

*Dear Donald,*

*When I was at the Chapel of the Holy Face of Jesus, Padre Pio & Blessed Mother; and the invitation was made to go on Saturday, March 20, 2004 to hear a talk on the Shroud, I just knew I had to go, but I didn’t*

*know why. The feeling was so strong that I needed to go even if I went alone. As it turned out, my sister-in-law accompanied me.*

*We were totally unprepared for the beginning speech, but as it started I knew why I was drawn there. It was Jesus who sent me there and knew I needed to hear what I did.*

*First, let me say that you and your brother, Father Joe, were very courageous to share with us. Also, it is wonderful that you could turn such an experience into goodness and forgiveness. If only all the victims could do the same, it would be a beautiful event. Jesus has truly blessed you with this forgiveness, and if you can forgive, then surely we must open our hearts and forgive.*

*I have been struggling with the events that have taken place in our Church since the beginning. I have been searching for answers and have attended whatever I could, looking for some answers. I attended the Voice of the Faithful meetings to see what I could learn (however, I never became a member). A lot was learned, but my questions were still not answered. I attended a talk by a probation officer who works with abusers. Again I learned, but all my questions were still not answered. The probation officer stated that many studies were done and that pedophilia is not a disease as are alcoholism and drug abuse. They found that unless the pedophiles stayed in group therapy, they would go out again and abuse. It is just in them to act in this manner.*

*I took the Virtus course and again I learned how to identify the signs of a child who is being abused and what one should do. Again, I learned, but still my questions were not answered.*

*My parish is Our Lady of Lourdes in West Islip, and we have had four abusers, three priests and a parishioner who was very active in the church. The priests of our parish never addressed the issues and only casually made mention of the situation on occasion. I waited and waited, asked for listening sessions, and was told it was over and that listening sessions would not do anything to help. I attended a listening session at St. Cyril's where they were a little more open, but still my questions were still not answered.*

*Donald, you and your brother, answered all my questions and I walked away with peace in my heart. Hearing from the abused, and a good priest, totally helped me. Hearing Father Joe explaining how a good priest feels was an eye opener, and I know it took a great deal of courage on his part. We do need to hear from the good priests. Prior to hearing about his feelings, I could not understand why the good priests did not come forward, but now I will pray for them and you, Donald.*

*It would be a wonderful thing if you could both give more of these talks. I feel it has been neglected too long, and we need to hear so we can begin the healing. May peace be with both you and your brother.*

*There is still one problem I am struggling with and maybe you could help me with it. I have less of a problem forgiving the priests who committed the abuse (for as you and your brother said, they should not have ever been priests in the first place, and they did not know they were*

*doing anything wrong). My problem is with the bishops and others who swept it under the carpet. The bishops, etc. knew better and what were they thinking by hiding it and moving these priests around and laying out large sums of money to cover up. This is where my forgiveness and understanding is being tested.*

*I feel we have been deceived and our trust has been broken.*

*Sincerely,*

*Mrs. Maria Lanfair*

I would like to thank Mrs. Maria Lanfair for this wonderfully worded letter of encouragement. I am so glad and humbled that I was the source of her questions being answered.

As a victim, I hear from many who are upset with the bishops for hiding what was going on. Before I proceed to the next chapter, which will address this issue, I have to make a correction to the last paragraph in Mrs. Lanfair's letter. Mrs. Lanfair quoted my brother and me as saying, "They should not have ever been priests in the first place and they did not know that they were doing anything wrong." We did say, "They should not have ever been priests in the first place" and that "*some* priests did not know that they were doing anything wrong," because they are not in a right frame of mind. Some priests that are deceived or not in a right frame of mind see no evil or wrong in what they did. They do not see sin in their actions. Some truly believe that this is spreading angelic love. They cross over a very fine line in what they perceive to be the love of Christ. Most others, however, do know precisely what they are doing. They are very calculating predators and will exercise great patience and cunning to achieve what they are after. Some molest many victims and some enter into relationships (in their mind) with one individual lasting many years. They convince themselves that they are actually in love with the victim. Whatever classification, they should not have been priests.

## What Happened?

My first thought (and these are my thoughts) would be that something went wrong with the screening process in the seminaries. Something happened with *all* seminaries, the scandal affected *all* dioceses. The scandal was not limited or localized, so whatever happened, it was on a grand scale and I believe what caused this scandal was very deep. By deep, I mean that this scandal was a patiently thought out plan to destroy the priesthood, the Church and the Eucharist by the master of evil and deception, the devil. This is no great revelation given to me by heaven (at least I don't think so). This is, however, a conclusion that I reached after much reflection. First, I must say that I do believe that there is a devil. I believe there are good angels constantly beholding the face of God, influencing us to do good and praising God, and I believe that there are also bad angels, headed by Lucifer, who influence us to sin through temptation and constantly seek to destroy and corrupt anything given us by God. I am not the only one who thinks this, by the way. After the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI made a statement that to this day still bothers me. Pope Paul VI said, "The smoke of Satan has entered the Church." I don't know what Pope Paul VI meant by that statement, and there is no one I know who can explain what the Holy Father meant either. Why did he say this? What does it mean? Did someone do something that upset him, and this was his reaction? Or, was something put in motion and it was beyond his power to stop it? I tend to go along with the second option after much reflection. This statement made by the Holy Father, I myself takes very seriously when I look at the source of the statement. This is the Vicar of Christ on earth, the shepherd who leads the flock for Jesus, the visible head of the Church on earth. For him, our Holy Father, to tell us that the smoke of Satan has entered the Church itself, I take that seriously. I believe that the Second Vatican Council was probably the greatest Council ever in Church history, so I don't

think the Holy Father was talking about the Council itself. I do believe, however, that there is a diabolical influence in interpreting Vatican II, and that this, in turn, directly led to the sexual abuse scandal and also to the apparent heretical interpretations of Vatican II so prevalent in the Church today. I believe the Holy Father knew this and was not able to stop it. I believe good faithful candidates (or those in line with the Magisterium of the Church) for the priesthood were weeded out and those that desired change, were let in. But why? How? The answer to the *why* is simple: to destroy the Church, the priesthood and the Eucharist. By doing this the devil dramatically increases his chances of gaining my soul. Now I don't necessarily believe that every wrong or bad decision I make in my life is a temptation of the devil, but I do believe that he is constantly on the prowl studying me to see how to tempt me. It is precisely because the devil wants my soul that I have to remain prayerful. I *need* the Eucharist, I *need* the Church, I *need* all that God has provided for my salvation. I especially seek the intercession of and the protection of the Immaculate Heart of my Blessed Mother Mary. I am not overly anxious, but I am aware. I forgave not out of fear of losing my soul, but because I love Jesus. Because I love Jesus, the devil hates me. That is *why* the devil wants to destroy the Eucharist in my life. *How* could the devil have pulled me from the Eucharist and Church to put my soul in jeopardy? For two years of my life, I was exposed to very heretical teachings and sad to say, from Catholic teachers. Now I am not going to name names or point fingers. That is not what this is about, but I will say what I have to say regarding my own experience and where it almost brought me. During these two years, I was very greatly challenged. I heard teachings like:

1. Jesus did not intend to institute a Church.
2. The Eucharist (the bread) is not that important because, after all, we are Eucharist.
3. We can die in a state of mortal sin, accept Jesus in purgatory, and thereby gain eternal salvation.
4. Jesus did not 'will' to die. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I could go on and on, but I won't. I do, however, look at these teachings as a greater scandal than the sex abuse scandal. Being sexually abused by a priest will not stop me from going to heaven, but if I allow myself to accept these teachings, I place my soul at risk. This almost happened. If I as a victim after being sexually abused by a Roman Catholic priest thought for a moment that Jesus did not intend to institute His Church, I might have said to myself, Why do I bother to receive the sacraments? I don't need them. After all, I am justified in my being angry with the Church. God can reveal Himself to me in nature, and *I* am Eucharist. I don't need the bread, so I can leave the Church and the sacraments and not worry about my salvation. I don't need any of this. As I said, "I might say this to myself." I thank God that I did not accept any of the heretical teachings that I had heard. "Heretical" or "heresy" are very serious words, and I mean it to sound serious. Besides being sexually abused by a priest, for two years I had knots in my stomach and my soul was twisted, as everything that I believed in, my very faith felt as if it was being ripped out of my very being. I heard fellow classmates say that they did not know what to believe anymore. They were confused. The instructors were perfectly willing to leave them confused. One of my fellow classmates told me that she did not attend Mass anymore because she felt that she did not need it. She got a "better feeling" attending these classes. Now all of these people who shall remain nameless are good, wonderful people, but they are being deceived. The instructors are good people, but they are deceived. Again, I don't mean that these people are diabolical themselves, but they are being diabolically deceived. A person might not know that he or she is deceived. Someone who is senile doesn't know that he or she is senile. This is what I think Pope Paul VI meant by "The smoke of Satan," a total diabolical twisting of the truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit through the magisterium of the Church. For two years I prayed very hard for good spiritual direction and made it through, keeping my faith intact. I remained faithful to the Holy Father and I remained faithful to my faith, meaning I remained *faithful* to Jesus. The reason that I bring this all up is that I am reflecting on Matthew, 18:6. One

day I was speaking with another victim who was abused by a priest. He said, “Remember, Don Matthew 18:6, ‘Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.’ These priests are going to have a lot to answer for.” This person was an altar boy when he was abused; he has left the Church and the sacraments. Now personally, I believe the priests, who abused God’s children will have plenty to answer for, but I don’t believe Matthew 18:6 refers to the sexual abuse scandal or to priests who abuse children. I do believe that Matthew 18:6 refers to the heretical teachings I was speaking about above and those who would teach it and allow one to lose his true faith. When I read Matthew 18:6, I thought to myself, Is Jesus referring to children when he said “little ones?” Are the “little ones” children who were abused by priests as some victims think? To find the answer to this, I looked to Matthew 18:1-4, “At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, ‘Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?’ He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, ‘Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.’” I believe Jesus was referring to His disciples when he said “little ones” in Matthew 18:6. He told His disciples to become like children. So I believe that when Jesus says, “Whoever causes one of these little ones to sin,” He is referring to His disciples, and when Jesus says sin, I believe He is actually saying “whoever causes one of these disciples to stumble in, cause a weakening in or fall away from his faith, that it would be better for him to put a millstone about his neck.” If I mislead you or weaken your faith, I am going to have a problem when I face God. Our first Holy Father, the apostle Peter, predicts the smoke of Satan or heretical teachings within the Church, referred to by Pope Paul VI, I believe in scripture. In 2 Peter 2:1-3 Peter tells us, “There were also false prophets among the people, just as there *will* (emphasis added) be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies and even deny the Master who ransomed them, bringing swift destruction on

themselves. Many will follow their licentious ways, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled. In their greed they will exploit you with fabrications, but from of old their condemnation has not been idle and their destruction does not sleep.” (All quotes of scripture are from the *New American Bible*.) The scholars who compiled this edition state in their interpretation of this passage, “The pattern of false prophets among the Old Testament people of God will recur through *false teachers in the Church* (emphasis added). Such destructive opinions of heretical sects bring loss of faith in Christ, contempt for the way of salvation and immorality.” The *false teachers in the Church* are the *smoke of Satan in the Church*. After those two terrible years of being misled, I almost left that which enabled me to forgive, the Eucharist.

I would like to say to any fellow victims who might have left the Church that the narrative which follows Matthew 18:6-9 Temptations to Sin, is Matthew 18:10-14 The Parable of the Lost Sheep: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in Heaven always look upon the face of My Heavenly Father. What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your Heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.” To my fellow victims, I pray that you come back to Jesus in the Eucharist. To those who would teach contrary to the faith, Matthew 18:14 “In just the same way, it is not the will of your Heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.”

Why would the devil go through all of this scheming and planning and cause these warped teachings and scandal in the Church? What does he care about my soul? Why bother? Quite frankly, because he hates me, he hates Jesus, he hates Jesus’ Church, he hates children, and he hates you. But why? Why does he hate so much? Why does the devil have so much hatred in the first place? Before he was condemned to eternal damnation Lucifer was the greatest angel in Heaven, the angel of light. No matter how great Lucifer is, there is one thing he will never know

or experience. The devil will never know that which I was able to do, *forgive*. The devil will never know or experience forgiveness. God will never forgive the devil. Now don't feel bad about that. It is a trick of the devil to make you feel sorry for him. The devil is an angel, albeit a bad angel, but he *is* an angel. Angels are a creation of God, just like us. They are a race of beings, just like us. They are the angelic race, and we are the human race. We are born with free will. An angel is created with a free will, at a much greater spiritual level. When an angel sins once, that one act of turning from God is enough to warrant eternal damnation. As far as we know, God did not become an angel, die for angels and redeem them. There is no redemption for the bad angels. They condemned themselves by an act of their own free will, and they know this. They hate God with an eternal hatred. They will never be forgiven. The bad angels hate us because we do receive forgiveness many times in a lifetime. The bad angels especially hate us because of the Eucharist. We can receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The angels don't. Satan, because of pride could never bring himself to do what the good angels do, namely, worship Jesus within us. Satan would never do what the angel of Fatima did. At Fatima (Our Lady of Fatima is a Church approved apparition), an angel appeared to three children prior to the Blessed Mother's appearance. On the angel's third visit to the children, he was holding a chalice in his hands, with a Host above it from which some drops of blood were falling into the sacred vessel. The angel left the Host and the chalice suspended in the air, and prostrated himself on the ground next to the children, and prayed the following prayer with them three times: "Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore you profoundly, and I offer you the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference with which He Himself is offended. And through the infinite merits of His most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of you the conversion of poor sinners. Amen." The angel then rose, and taking the Host, he gave it to Lucia. He gave the Precious

Blood held in the chalice to Jacinta and Francisco, saying, “Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men. Repair their crimes and console your God.” Then he prostrated himself on the ground once more, but this time he faced the children and repeated the prayer to the most Holy Trinity three times and then disappeared. The angel of Fatima adored Jesus now within the children. Satan, because of pride, will never bow down to a human, and he will never receive Jesus in the Eucharist. The devil knows all too well that the Eucharist is the physical body and blood of Jesus. That is why he seeks to destroy the priesthood and the Church. Only a validly ordained priest can consecrate the Eucharist. The devil knows this. If he can destroy the priesthood, convince us that the Eucharist is not that important and influence us to leave the sacraments administered through the Church, half his battle would be won.

By the grace of God and much prayer and sacrifice, the devil did not succeed in pulling me from the Eucharist. I mentioned earlier, Jesus is the center of my life, and I mean it. To keep Jesus in the center of my life, I receive Him very often in the Eucharist. The Eucharist enables me to be the way I am, to be able to forgive, and to go beyond forgiveness and make acts of reparation for the sake of others, to be more and more Christ-like. I believe that Jesus is truly present, body, blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. Jesus is substantially present. The bread and wine retain their appearance but the substance changes and becomes the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that my Catholic faith contains the *fullness* of all that God had to reveal for my salvation. Now, I don't mean to sound condescending to my sisters and brothers of other Christian ecclesial communities, but I do want to share with you what enabled me to do what I did. I pray very hard that one day, hopefully in my lifetime, we will enjoy full communion. If I believe, as I do, that my Catholic faith enjoys the real physical Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist, how can I not want to share that with you? I am a Roman Catholic. A Roman Catholic priest sexually abused me. I was subject to heretical teachings within the Roman

Catholic Church. I had every good reason to leave. But I didn't, and it was the Eucharist that kept me with my Catholic faith. I believe very seriously that if I am properly disposed at Mass, I do not only *receive* Communion, but I am actually *in* communion. I am *in* communion with the Church. I am *in* communion with the Mystical Body of Christ; I am *in* communion with the bishops who are *in* Communion with the Bishop of Rome. Jesus' blood courses through my veins. Now, I believe that for me to be properly disposed in the first place, I must be faithful to the magisterial teachings of the Church. Unfortunately, there are many Catholics who *receive* communion but who are not *in* communion. This is what enabled me to forgive, make an act of reparation and get past two years of heretical teachings, the Eucharist. I pray that one-day, all may be one, *in* communion.

## Celibacy

“If priests were allowed to marry, this abuse would not happen. This would end child sexual abuse in the Church, after all celibacy is not natural.”

I hear this from many good people when I discuss my experience of sexual abuse. Many people believe that if priests were allowed to marry, there would be no child sexual abuse. I believe celibacy is not the issue at all. Taking a vow of celibacy does not make someone become a child molester. Overall in the Church, about four percent of priests have sexually abused children. A very low percentage. Now don't get me wrong, child sexual abuse is never okay, one percent would be too high as far as I am concerned. But this percentage in the priesthood is low when compared to some other professions. My point is that not all priests who take a vow of celibacy become child molesters and most people who do sexually molest children have not taken a vow of celibacy. I myself might be called to the celibate life without my desiring it. If my wife becomes an invalid, I am *called* to the celibate life. If I, by myself, go overseas on vacation or to war, I am *called* to the celibate life. I will not become a child molester, no matter how long I am called to the celibate life, whether two weeks, four years or a lifetime. I do not and will not *discourage* any priest from living a celibate life. I do and will *encourage* any priest living the celibate life. I pray very hard for my brother, and for all priests to stay true to their vow of celibacy. As far as celibacy not being natural, I look at Jesus always as the example. Jesus was very much human. Jesus was celibate. Was Jesus not natural? Of course He was. If I keep whispering in a priest's ear, “You're not natural, you're not natural,” I just might, and in all likelihood would, cause him not to stay true to his vow of celibacy. I would be the cause of scandal. I believe that celibacy has been the norm, right from day one in the Church. I do hear different arguments (I don't mean yelling and screaming) regarding celibacy as a discipline in the early Church. Many people look at Matthew 8:14,15 as proof that the apostles or first bishops

were married. Matthew 8: 4,5 says, “Jesus entered the house of Peter, and saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand, the fever left her, and she rose and waited on him.” I look at this passage as proof that Peter was indeed married at one time in his life. What this passage does not reveal to me is if Peter was still married when he became an apostle. Was Peter a widower? Did Peter’s wife die before this? We simply don’t know. The gospels don’t mention Peter’s wife. Jesus did not take just anyone as one of the twelve. He prayed very hard to His Father. He called only twelve out of the many that would have followed Him. Were they all celibate? I don’t know for sure, but I have no good reason to believe they weren’t when they became apostles. It was normal for Jewish women to be betrothed between the ages of 12 and 14. By today’s standards, this would be child sexual abuse. Again, this was normal, but just because it was the norm doesn’t mean that *everyone* was married at this age. I believe Mary also led a celibate life. Celibacy is not abnormal whether you choose that lifestyle of your own free will or if you are *called* to it. Even if we find that priests were not celibate in the early Church that has no bearing on the Church today. Today the discipline for the priesthood is celibacy. Celibacy does not make people sexually molest children. I myself enjoy an intimate sexual relationship with my wife. A priest freely gives up that intimate sexual relationship with a wife to enter into a very intimate yet non-sexual relationship with Jesus. He gives up (sacrifices) that relationship for the sake of the Kingdom, which in turn means that he makes that sacrifice or offering for my sake. All I can do is say thank you to all of Jesus’ priests. I pray for you and encourage you all. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for offering up that lifestyle for my sake.

## Where I am Today

My bishop, Bishop William F. Murphy, has been very supportive of me. He has been a human dynamo in handling the sexual abuse situation in my diocese (the Diocese of Rockville Centre). He immediately formed an office for the protection of children and young people. He appointed a very special person to head this office; Dr. Eileen Puglisi. Eileen has become a good friend of mine. Eileen also has great respect for and faith in me. Eileen asked me to help form an abuse victim support group in the diocese. I pray very hard for her to continue to do the good work that she does. The bishop has appointed me, a victim, to the Diocesan Review Board. This is the board, which investigates all priestly sexual abuse allegations in the diocese and then makes recommendations to the bishop regarding, the individual's suitability for the priesthood.

I give presentations on forgiveness and reparation.

I am a trained facilitator for the Virtus program. I go to many parishes around the diocese and facilitate or present a three-hour awareness session. I help the community to identify and prevent child sexual abuse. I pray very hard for my bishop, and he prays for me. He thanks me for all I do for the Church, and I thank him for all he has done.

I am also, co-leader of the Confraternity of the Passion. This is a confraternity headquartered at the Immaculate Conception Monastery in Jamaica, New York.

## Conclusion

One day, Jesus was explaining to his disciples how to handle a person who sins against them. Peter perked up and keyed right in on this discourse. Something or someone must have been bothering Peter and he approached Jesus and asked, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him?” Now Peter knew the law. If he had asked this question to a Jewish rabbi during his time, the answer would be three. Three times you were required to forgive, and then you could retaliate. Peter knew that Jesus was very different and that Jesus would probably require one to forgive more than the law required. So Peter, wanting to make himself look good, did not wait for an answer and said to Jesus, “As many as seven times?” Now Peter felt really good; he more than doubled the number of times required by law that he would have to forgive. He made himself look like a really good disciple. He was being very, very forgiving, but he still wanted to put some fixed number on the number of times that he had to forgive before he could retaliate. Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.” Peter must have gone into shock when he heard this. What Jesus was telling them was that forgiveness is limitless. There is no set number of times that you forgive and then retaliate. Jesus knew how much this shocked them, so because He loved them and us so much, He goes on to explain the importance of limitless forgiveness. “That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount (literally, ten thousand talents, the equivalent of millions of dollars today). Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ (An empty promise as the debt was too great and could never be paid back in a lifetime). Moved with compassion, the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the

debt.” This was more than the servant could ever have hoped for. He did not even ask to be forgiven for the whole debt, but his master forgave the *whole* debt. “When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount (literally, one hundred danarii, the equivalent of one day’s wages). He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.”

I have sinned in my life. If God does not forgive me, the debt that I owe to Him is unpayable; my punishment would be endless (eternal). If God does forgive me for sinning against Him, I in turn *must* forgive someone who trespasses against me, and from the heart. I must truly forgive from the heart. If I don’t forgive from the heart, then at the last judgment God will withdraw the forgiveness that He has already given me and throw me to the torturers until everything that I owe is paid back. The problem for me is that I owe God so much that I would never be able to pay Him back. It would take an eternity.

I made a decision with my own free will to forgive. God gave me sufficient grace to do so. I recognized it and responded to it. I made a decision with my own free will to make an act of reparation. God gave me sufficient grace to do so. I recognized it and responded to it. If I did not forgive, I would still be subject to the torturers: restlessness, anger, frustration, and anxiety. These are all gone; I truly enjoy the peace of Christ in me. I forgave because I love Jesus. I enjoy the understanding that everything necessary for my salvation and to be Christ-like is contained

right here in His Catholic Church. I enjoy my God in the Eucharist. He shares in my humanity, and He lets me share in His Divinity in the Eucharist. It is the Eucharist, which enables me to be more and more Christ-like. What a loving and humble God.

*I share all of this with you. This is my story.*

## Biography

Born on April 7, 1953, Donald H. Nohs is the second oldest of 10 children. There are six boys and four girls in his immediate family. Donald is the oldest son of Donald and Dolores Nohs.

\*Donald lived most of his life in Copiague, New York. He attended Deauville Gardens Elementary School in Copiague and graduated in 1971 from Copiague Senior High School.

\*Donald is married to Claudia and has three children, a son Donald (age 27), daughter Toni (age 26), and another daughter Taylor (age 11).

\*Donald works for the Town of Brookhaven, as the Executive Assistant to the Commissioner in the Waste Management department.

\*Donald is the president of the John Bosco Lodge (Order Son's of Italy in America).

\*Executive board member (vice chairman) of the Conservative Party for the Town of Babylon.

\*Executive board member of the Conservative Party for Suffolk County.

\*Director of the Society of The Holy Face of Jesus, an organization that promotes devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus.

\*Co Leader of The Confraternity of the Passion

\*Member of the Rockville Centre Diocesan Review Board, which reviews all sexual abuse cases in the diocese.

\*Virtus program facilitator (gives awareness sessions) on how to identify and prevent sexual abuse in the community.

\*Donald also gives presentations on the Passion of Jesus according to His Holy Shroud. Donald has life-size replicas of the Holy Shroud and replicas of the instruments of the crucifixion; ie.: nail, flagrum, spear, crown etc. which he brings with him for display. Donald travels all over the US and Canada with his presentations on the Holy Shroud, and speaks on forgiveness.