

My name is Judy Jones, I am 61 years old and I live in St Louis, Mo.

I was born Judy Ann Block, here at Columbus at University Hospital. I grew up in Woodfield, Ohio. I am now the SNAP leader for the Steubenville area diocese.

I was the oldest of 11 kids, and I was raised very catholic. My dad was the veterinarian of Monroe County. My grandpa was the Monroe County commissioner. His grandpa was a farmer who helped to build St. Sylvester Church in Woodfield.

About 15 years ago, one of my sisters came to visit me, and told me that our brother had been sexually abused by our parish priest of St. Sylvester's Church.

Father Robert A. Brown.

For me, this news was a total shock.

I became so angry, and then so sad.

I wondered why would Fr. Brown do such an awful thing to my little brother.

He had been our priest at St Sylvester's all our lives. All of us kids went to Mass

every Sunday, we went to confession to

him every other Saturday. He baptized

us. He married me in St Sylvester's Church.

The kids were taught that our Priest

was perfect, always right, and very holy.

On that day, 15 years ago, this news

about my brother's abuse, changed my

life. Alas, by this time in my life - our

brother had already distanced himself from

the family - he never came to family reunions.

never came to visit, and stopped communication. He had moved to Steubenville and totally rejected his Catholic upbringing and became a Baptist minister.

About 5 years ago, because I wanted to know the facts, I went to visit my brother. This is when he told me the whole gory story. This is what he told me:

This abuse took place when my brother was 16 years old; Father Brown was 58. It happened in the church rectory at St. Sylvester. Other young boys were present and alcohol was plentiful. It was an overnight party. Father Brown gave out the sleeping arrangements and my brother was chosen to sleep with him. This was considered an honor.

During that night, Father Brown started feeling my brother's penis - and masturbating him. My brother was in total shock and confusion - he didn't know what to do.

You see, at that time my brother was a teenager. He had been taught that masturbation was a grave sin - so prior to that night my brother had gone to confession to Father Brown, to confess to having committed this sin. So what this priest was doing to him in that bed - did not make sense at all. My brother did not elaborate what all happened that night, but he did say that the next morning, Father Brown awakened him, and told him that what had happened the night before was a sin,

and it was "wrong" - so my brother needed to go to confession, but Fr. Brown could not be the one to hear his confession.

So Father Brown drove my brother to another town in southeastern Ohio, to go to confession to another priest. (Obviously a safe + prearranged confessorial by Fr. Brown.)

After this event, my brother's life began to fall apart. He was lost, confused, afraid to tell anyone, he became afraid that he was gay. He became deeply involved in abusing drugs and alcohol. He even confessed to me of coming close to committing suicide.

When my brother was in his 20's, he attempted to tell our dad about his abuse. But to his disappointment - our own "dad"

refused to believe him - my dad could not believe that a priest would ever do such a thing.

This has been very hard for me to accept. I have 3 children, I have 3 grandkids. So I can't imagine not believing them or being there for them in a time of crisis.

I have asked myself many times why - why did this happen? why does it bother me so much? why can't I stop thinking about it?

I have come to realize that the answer lies in my feelings of helplessness. Helpless to protect my brother, helpless in recognizing his pain and suffering at a time when he was all alone. Helpless in helping my brother to heal. And - helpless to expose my brother's

abused to prevent other boys from being  
abused.

I have since learned that 3 of my cousins  
were also sexually abused by this same  
priest. I have no doubt there are many  
more victims.

My brother is now 53 years old. Our dad  
went to his grave - not believing his own  
son. That was the mindset for many, many  
Catholics. That is still the mindset for  
many, many Catholics. They just can't  
believe that a priest would sexually abuse  
anyone, let alone an innocent child.

This is exactly why we need Senate  
Bill 17. This is exactly why we need  
the "Window" to provide an opportunity

for more victims to come forward. This bill will help to expose the truth, to expose the perpetrators, and therefore protect our children and our grandchildren.

I really love mine, I know you love yours. Please pass this bill as written.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Jones

