

25 Apr.

THE INFORMATION WHICH I AM ABOUT TO SHARE WITH YOU AND THE WORLD IS ONE OF GREAT RELIEF AND EMBARRASSMENT TO ME. I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START EXCEPT TO JUST BEGIN WRITING. SO HERE GOES!

FROM MY FIRST DAY IN SCHOOL AT ST. ANTHONY'S UNTIL MY JUNIOR YEAR AT BISHOP DAVID HIGH SCHOOL I SOMEHOW KNEW MY LIFE'S CALLING WAS THE PRIESTHOOD. I WANTED TO BE, ACT, TEACH, CELEBRATE MASS, AND MINISTER TO THE SICK JUST AS I HAD OBSERVED FR. JOSEPH AT ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH ON MARKET STREET.

MY FAMILY MOVED FROM THE WEST END OF LOUISVILLE IN 1964 TO PLEASURE RIDGE PARK AFTER I FINISHED THE THIRD GRADE AT ST. ANTHONY'S. MY NEW SCHOOL AND CHURCH WAS NOW ST. POLYCARP. WHILE AT ST. ANTHONY'S I MADE MY FIRST CONFESSION, FIRST COMMUNION, AND CONFIRMATION. I CAN STILL REMEMBER THE EXCITEMENT AND AWE ASSOCIATED WITH RECEIVING THESE SACRAMENTS. I KNEW SOME DAY I WOULD BE ADMINISTERING THESE SACRAMENTS TO OTHERS WITH ALL THE REVERENCE AND SOLEMNITY WHICH WAS PRESENTED TO ME.

AS A GRADE SCHOOL STUDENT, I WENT TO MASS EVERYDAY WITH THE REST OF MY CLASSMATES. WHILE MOST OF THE OTHER STUDENTS COMPLAINED ABOUT GOING, I GLADLY WENT. I WAS EXCITED ABOUT THE EUCHARIST AND WHAT IT STOOD FOR. ONE OF MY ASPIRATIONS WHILE AT ST. POLYCARP WAS THAT OF BECOMING AN ALTAR BOY. I WANTED SO VERY MUCH TO BE AS CLOSE TO MY SAVIOUR AS I POSSIBLY COULD. I THOUGHT ONE WAY WOULD BE

IN ASSISTING THE PRIEST DURING THE MASS. AFTERALL, THE PRIEST WAS, IN MY WAY OF THINKING, THE NEXT CLOSEST PERSON TO GOD. AND IN SERVING THE MASS I WOULD BE CLOSE TO THE PRIEST, THE ALTAR, THE EUCHARIST, AND ULTIMATELY MY FIRST STEP TOWARD THE PRIESTHOOD. IT WAS FOR ME A VERY MEMORABLE AND EXCITING TIME IN MY LIFE.

I CAN REMEMBER AS A CHILD GROWING UP MY PARENT'S TALKING ABOUT AND WISHING ONE OF THEIR 5 SONS WOULD GO INTO THE PRIESTHOOD. EVEN THEN I KNEW THE IMPORTANCE OF HELPING OTHERS. I CAN ALSO REMEMBER MY MOTHER PRAYING OUT LOUD TO GOD TO SHOW THE WAY FOR HER SONS TO SEE THE LIGHT AND FOLLOW IT. THIS PRAYER FROM MY MOTHER GAVE ME ADDED DETERMINATION TO BE A PRIEST. SHE TRIED TO THE BEST OF HER ABILITY TO EXEMPLIFY THE SPIRIT OF WHAT IT MEANT TO BE CATHOLIC. THIS ONLY HELPED TO DEEPEN MY FAITH AND BELIEF IN GOD AND JESUS CHRIST.

AT THE END OF MY FIFTH GRADE I WAS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME AN ALTAR BOY. FINALLY, ONE OF MY DREAMS WAS COMING TRUE. I HAD BEEN STUDYING VERY HARD TO MEMORIZE THE LATIN RESPONSES WHICH THE ALTAR BOY'S WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR RECITING.

FR. SCHWABENTON WAS THE PASTOR AT ST. POLYCARP WHILE I WAS AT THE SCHOOL. FR. ARTHUR WOODS WAS THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR. FR. WOODS WAS THE PRIEST WHO WOULD "TEST" THE BOYS WHO WERE INTERESTED IN BECOMING ALTAR BOY'S. THE TESTS CONSISTED OF RECITING A PART OF THE LATIN RESPONSES AND DEMONSTRATING YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF HOW THE ORDER OF THE

MASS WAS DONE. I HAD NO TROUBLE WITH THE TESTING. I HAD MADE IT MY BUSINESS TO MEMORIZE THE ORDER OF THE MASS SO THAT WHEN THE TIME CAME I WOULD BE READY. FR. WOODS WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH MY PERFORMANCE THAT HE ALLOWED ME TO SERVE THE SIX O'CLOCK MASS THE NEXT MORNING. FOR ME, IT WAS A GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENT AND AN HONOR TO BE SELECTED AS A SERVER FOR THE MASS. I WAS WELL ON MY WAY TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

ABOUT A MONTH AFTER BECOMING AN ALTAR BOY I HAD A VERY DISTURBING EPISODE HAPPEN TO ME. WHILE GETTING READY TO SERVE THE SIX O'CLOCK MASS ONE MORNING FR. WOODS CALLED ME OUT TO THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA. THERE WAS A DOOR LEADING FROM THE SACRISTY TO THE CAFETERIA WHICH WAS USUALLY OPEN IN THE EARLY MORNING MASSES. I WENT INTO THE CAFETERIA AND SAW FR. WOODS SITTING IN THE DARK SMOKING A CIGARETTE JUST AS HE USUALLY DID BEFORE DRESSING FOR MASS. HE ASKED ME TO COME OVER TO HIM AND SIT ON HIS LAP FOR A MOMENT. AS I DID, HE GRABBED MY SHOULDERS AND PULLED ME TO HIM AND KISSED ME ON THE MOUTH. AS HE STOPPED KISSING ME, HE REACHED DOWN AND CUPPED HIS HAND TO MY GROIN AREA. I TRIED TO RESIST BUT FR. WOODS TOLD ME IT WAS ALL RIGHT FOR A PRIEST TO DO THIS. I WASN'T QUITE SURE WHAT HE MEANT BY ALL RIGHT BUT I DID NOT TRY TO RESIST ANY LONGER. HE TOLD ME THAT IF I WANTED TO REMAIN AN ALTAR BOY I WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS AND THAT ONLY A PRIEST WOULD UNDERSTAND WHY HE WOULD DO THIS. HE TOLD ME NOT TO EVEN TELL MY PARENTS BECAUSE THEY WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND

EITHER. I WAS QUITE CONFUSED ABOUT THE WHOLE EPISODE BUT I RESPECTED AND BELIEVED WHAT FR. WOODS SAID AS THE TRUTH. THIS FIRST EPISODE OCCURRED APPROXIMATELY JUNE OF 1966.

THE MOLESTATIONS BY FR. WOODS CONTINUED SPORADICALLY UNTIL DECEMBER 1968 WHEN I WAS HALF WAY THROUGH MY EIGHTH GRADE YEAR. I BECAME MORE AND MORE FRIGHTENED AND CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT FR. WOODS WAS DOING TO ME AS WELL AS OTHER YOUNG MEN. I KNEW HE WAS MOLESTING OTHER BOYS BECAUSE THEY WOULD JOKE ABOUT IT IN ROUND-ABOUT WAYS. FOR INSTANCE, "WHAT DID YOU DO AT FR. WOODS' PARENTS HOUSE LAST NIGHT?" OR "I HEARD FR. WOODS TOOK YOU HOME AFTER FOOTBALL OR BASKETBALL PRACTICE LAST NIGHT. WHERE ELSE DID YOU GO?"

MOST OF THE MOLESTATIONS TOOK PLACE AT THE 6 AM MASSES, ON FIELDS TRIPS FOR THE ALTAR BOYS, ON TRIPS TO HIS PARENT'S HOME, OR TO JUST GO TO THE LOCAL EHRLER'S ICE CREAM STORE.

FR. WOODS SEEMED TO BECOME MORE BRAZEN IN HIS MOLESTATIONS IN THAT HE WOULD PUT HIS HAND ON YOUR CROTCH IN FRONT OF OTHER ALTAR BOYS. THEY WOULD SEE HIM DO IT AND JUST SMILE. THE KISSING BECAME ALMOST SECOND NATURE TO HIM. WHEN I WOULD ARRIVE AT CHURCH IN THE MORNINGS HE WOULD BE WAITING TO KISS ME.

AFTER A WHILE, FR. WOODS GOT MORE DARING. HE BEGAN TO UNZIP MY PANTS AND PUT HIS HAND INSIDE THEM. SOMETIMES JUST ON THE OUTSIDE OF MY UNDERWEAR, BUT MOST OF THE TIME HE WOULD PLACE HIS HAND UNDER MY UNDERWEAR. HE WOULD

FONDLE ME USUALLY UNTIL I GOT AN ERECTION. HE WOULD THEN CONTINUE TO FONDLE AND RUB ON ME UNTIL I EJACULATED. HE ALWAYS HAD PLENTY OF HANDKERCHIEFS WITH HIM TO CLEAN ME UP WITH AFTERWARDS. WHILE DOING ALL OF THIS HE TOO WOULD HAVE AN ERECTION. SOMETIMES HE WOULD FONDLE HIMSELF UNTIL HE EJACULATED OR ASK ME TO DO IT FOR HIM. I WOULD TRY TO RESIST DOING THAT BUT HE WOULD TAKE MY HAND AND PUT IT ON HIS PENIS. I WAS TOO FRIGHTENED NOT TO DO IT BECAUSE I FEARED HE WOULD EITHER HURT ME OR TELL SOMEONE ABOUT WHAT I DID TO HIM.

I CAN ONLY RECALL TWO OCCASIONS WHERE HE ASKED ME TO PERFORM ORAL SEX ON HIM. I BEGGED HIM NOT TO ASK ME TO DO THAT. I WOULD DO ANYTHING ELSE FOR HIM BUT THAT. HE AGREED AND NEVER ASKED ME TO DO IT AGAIN. HE ALSO NEVER PERFORMED ORAL SEX ON ME EITHER.

THE MOLESTATIONS ON ME STOPPED IN JANUARY 1969. I QUIT BEING AN ALTAR BOY TO GET AWAY FROM FR. WOODS AND ALL OF HIS ADVANCES TOWARD ME. HE WAS ANGRY THAT I DID THIS AND THREATENED TO EXPOSE WHAT I DID TO MY PARENTS. ALTHOUGH HE NEVER DID TELL THEM, I ALWAYS HAD A FEAR HE WOULD EVEN UNTIL THE DAY I GRADUATED FROM THE EIGHTH GRADE.

I DO NOT KNOW HOW LONG HE CONTINUED TO MOLEST THE OTHER BOYS. THEY QUIT TALKING TO ME AFTER I QUIT BEING AN ALTAR BOY. IN FACT, THEY BECAME QUITE MEAN TOWARDS ME BUT WOULD NEVER ATTEMPT TO HARM ME. I WAS MUCH BIGGER THAN THEY WERE AND THEY KNEW I WOULD NOT LOSE A FIGHT.

I HAVE CARRIED A LOT OF ANGER TOWARD FR. WOODS AND MYSELF FOR THE LAST 25 YEARS. I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY A PRIEST WOULD DO THIS KIND OF THING TO ANYONE. I CAN'T BEGIN TO FATHOM HOW THEY WOULD JUSTIFY IT WITHIN THEMSELVES.

UP TO THAT POINT IN MY LIFE(ALL FOURTEEN YEARS) I HAD MANY QUESTIONS WHICH NEEDED TO BE ANSWERED. IS THIS THE WAY ALL PRIESTS ACT BEHIND CLOSED DOORS? WHY DID THEY BECOME PRIESTS IN THE FIRST PLACE? DID THEY THINK IT WAS ALL RIGHT TO DO THESE KINDS OF THINGS? HOW DID THEY JUSTIFY THESE TERRIBLE ACTS OF MOLESTATIONS WITHIN THEMSELVES? IS THIS WHAT I HAVE TO LOOK FORWARD TO WHEN I GO INTO THE SEMINARY? IF IT IS, THEN I'M NOT SURE IF THIS IS WHAT I WANT TO DO WITH MY LIFE.

I WENT ON TO BISHOP DAVID HIGH SCHOOL WHERE I LETTERED IN FOOTBALL. LOCKER ROOM SHOWERS WERE VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME BECAUSE I FELT QUITE INSECURE ABOUT MYSELF BEING AROUND OTHER YOUNG MEN. I SOON GOT USED TO IT BUT ALWAYS FELT A LITTLE UNEASY. DURING MY JUNIOR YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL, I ENROLLED IN FR. JUDGE MISSIONARY SEMINARY LOCATED IN THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS OF VIRGINIA. IT WAS MY SECOND DREAM TO COME TRUE. I FINALLY MADE IT TO THE SEMINARY! THERE WAS NO FOOTBALL TEAM BUT INSTEAD A SOCCER TEAM. THIS HELPED ME IN THE TRANSFORMATION FROM THE LAY SCHOOL TO THE SEMINARY.

I WAS ABLE TO FOCUS MY TIME ON STUDIES AND IN THE EVERYDAY WORKINGS OF THE SEMINARY LIFE. MY SHATTERED SELF

IMAGE WAS STARTING TO MEND. I SOON BECAME COMFORTABLE BEING AROUND THE PRIESTS WHO RAN THE SEMINARY. HOWEVER, AFTER THE FIRST TWO MONTHS I WAS MADE AWARE OF DIFFERENT SITUATIONS THAT WERE HAPPENING ON THE SENIOR CLASS LEVEL. IT SEEMS THERE WAS SOME MOLESTATIONS OCCURRING BY THE PRIEST WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF THE SEMINARY. THIS TIME I DID NOT WAIT AROUND FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPENED. I CALLED MY PARENT'S AND TOLD THEM I WANTED TO COME HOME. THEY ASKED ME WHY AND I JUST TOLD THEM I WAS HOME SICK. I JUST COULD NOT TELL THEM THE REAL REASON. IT WOULD SHATTER THEIR FAITH IN THE CHURCH, IN PRIESTS, AND POSSIBLY IN THEMSELVES.

I FINISHED THE REST OF MY HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION AT BISHOP DAVID HIGH SCHOOL. I BECAME VERY INDIFFERENT TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND QUIT GOING TO MASS LESS AND LESS. AFTER I GRADUATED I QUIT GOING TO MASS COMPLETELY. I BEGAN SEARCHING FOR TRUTH AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH OTHER RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

IN MANY WAYS I FEEL THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS ROBBED ME OF A LIFE WHICH I DREAMED OF AS A CHILD GROWING UP. AS I STATED IN THE BEGINNING, ALL I EVER WANTED TO BE WAS A PRIEST AND SERVE PEOPLE. I DO NOT NEGATE MY MARRIAGE AS MY SECOND CHOICE. ON THE CONTRARY, I FEEL I AM A BETTER PERSON FOR IT.

FOR THE PAST 21 YEARS I HAVE SOUGHT COUNSELING AND PSYCHIATRIC HELP ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS. I HAVE SPENT LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ON COUNSELING AND THERAPY.

MY SELF-ESTEEM AT ONE POINT IN MY LIFE HIT ROCK BOTTOM TO THE POINT OF ATTEMPTING SUICIDE. I HAVE NOT HELD A JOB FOR MORE THAN 5 YEARS AT A TIME DURING THE PAST 21 YEARS, FOR REASONS I FEEL STEM FROM MY CHILDHOOD PAST IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND NOT BEING ABLE TO FULFILL MY DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS. NOT BEING ABLE TO GROW UP IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE "NORMAL" WAY AS THE OTHER CHILDREN DID. I BLAME FR. WOODS FOR ALOT OF MY FEELINGS OF SHAME TOWARD THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE PRIESTHOOD. I REALIZE THAT PRIESTS ARE ONLY HUMAN AND CAN ONLY ACT AS SUCH. HOWEVER, PART OF THEIR VOWS TO GOD, THE CHURCH, AND TO THEMSELVES IS TO HONOR ALL PEOPLE AS CHILDREN OF GOD JUST AS GOD WOULD HONOR US. SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY IT SEEMS TO ME THAT MORAL VALUES FOR HUMANITY SHOULD PREVAIL OVER THE FLESH. TO ASK A PRIEST TO REMAIN CELEBATE IS THE UTMOST ACT OF FAITH. TO ASK A PRIEST TO BE GOD'S MESSENGER OF FAITH AND LOVE IS NO HIGHER THAN THAT OF ASKING AN UNORDAINED PERSON TO DO THE SAME. THE TEMPTATIONS CHRIST ENDURED AND CONQUERED SHOULD BE THE CORNERSTONE FOR ALL PEOPLE AND PRIESTS ALIKE.

FOR 21 YEARS I HAVE TRIED TO FIND MY PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN. OBVIOUSLY I WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO BECOME A PRIEST. IF I WERE, I DON'T BELIEVE GOD WOULD HAVE ALLOWED THE MOLESTATIONS OF FR. WOODS TO HAPPEN. AS SENTIENT BEINGS WE ARE GIVEN THE ABILITY TO KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG. BUT WHEN RIGHT AND WRONG BECOME ONE AND THE SAME WE LOSE THAT CONNECTION WITH GOD AND WHO WE REALLY ARE, AND ULTIMATELY



OUR SOULS. JESUS SAID TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU AND TO WATCH OVER ONE ANOTHER AS I DO YOU. I TAKE GREAT COMFORT IN THESE WORDS KNOWING THAT MY GOD IS WATCHING OVER ME, SOMETIMES FROM A DISTANCE. BUT, HE IS THERE.

BUT AS FOR FR. WOODS I HAVE JUST THIS TO SAY: JESUS TAUGHT US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AND FORGIVE OUR TRESPASSERS. HOWEVER, AT THIS POINT IN MY LIFE, I AM NOT QUITE READY TO SAY I FORGIVE YOU. I AM NOT REALLY SURE WHEN I WILL BE ABLE TO, IF EVER. I PRAY TO GOD FOR GUIDANCE IN THIS AREA. I LOVE YOU AS A PERSON, HOWEVER, I CANNOT SAY I LOVE YOU AS A PRIEST AND MINISTER. WHAT YOU HAVE DONE IS UNSIGHTLY IN THE EYES OF GOD AND HUMAN KIND. I HOPE AND PRAY THAT GOD UNDERSTANDS MY POINT OF VIEW AND ASK HIM TO SEND HIS HOLY SPIRIT TO ME FOR GUIDANCE AND COMFORTING.

MS-11's First Name