

LOG OF TESTIMONY — ROBERT COSTELLO

[Note from BishopAccountability: A redaction was made in this oral history to protect the confidentiality of a person mentioned in it.]

<p>Robert Costello May 23, 2011 56:43</p>	<p>Hello, my name is Robert Costello. I am 49 years old. Today is May 23rd, 2011 and I am here to record for posterity my story as a sexual clergy abuse survivor during the late 60's and mid-70's by Father John Cotter at St Theresa of Avila's church West Roxbury, MA while I was a student at the elementary school there.</p>	
<p>Grooming by perpetrator....</p> <p>Manipulation and abuse....</p> <p>Powerlessness, dissociation....</p>	<p>As far back as I can remember, and my memories of childhood are really shot, I just remember the abuse. It started when I was a Cub Scout and ironically my mother was the den mother for me and my twin brother. One of the things that bears mentioning is that before Father Cotter could abuse me he had to ingratiate himself in our community, the Cub Scouts, my family and my home. Then when he was above suspicion and reproach he could start his acts of intrinsic evil.</p> <p>And basically I remember it happening at Cub Scout events in the house and different venues where we would have events. The real memories are when we would go swimming at Curtis Hall in Jamaica Plain, Wednesday nights. Father Cotter said it was ok for me and my brother; Richard who were still in Cub Scouts to join the Boy Scouts swimming 'cause my older brother was there. The surprising (thing), which most people find surprising in 2011, is that nobody wore any bathing suits. So basically what that meant is there was Father Cotter, the pedophile and 20 to 25 naked boys running around.</p> <p>I remember him telling me that I was too young or too SMALL to join the other boys at the deep end or jump off the diving board which I wanted to do and during that time, under the guise of teaching me how to float, he would fondle me and digitally penetrate me. It was extremely painful because water offered really no friction. I can remember trying not to cry out in pain or grimace or anything. I just had to remain smiling. I remember it as a kind of out of body experience and</p>	<p>2:00</p> <p>3:00</p> <p>4:00</p>

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<p>Physical pain, aloneness and isolation....</p> <p>No Escape....</p>	<p>looking down as to what was going on and feeling hopelessly trapped but at the same time knowing that I couldn't cry out or anything.</p> <p>And it was quite difficult going home after those events because I was in a lot of pain and I couldn't really run across the street with the other kids and I had to stand on the way home because I couldn't sit on the bus with all the bumps and that sort of thing. So it was quite difficult to be able to say anything or do anything. I had to pretend that there was nothing wrong. And make excuses for standing all the way home and that sort of thing which to my brothers and the others, they don't really pay attention to that sort of thing so it was quite easy to get away with. But still it was quite painful.</p>	<p>5:00</p>
<p>Community groomed for acceptance.... Child groomed for silence....</p>	<p>I was also an altar boy and was often abused at morning mass or taken in the rectory in the Boy Scout room where they kept all their equipment. So it was quite a difficult childhood because growing up in West Roxbury in a Catholic Parish, your school is there, your activities are there, your family life is all there. So there was no place I could go to escape this. To try and get away would have caused attention to be drawn to me as to what was going on. I was being groomed not to say anything.</p>	<p>6:00</p>
<p>Betrayal and horror....</p>	<p>I remember one time at Adams Pond Boy Scout Camp in New Hampshire I was sick. I had swimmer's ear and was taken to the town doctor. He had suggested to Father Cotter or had told Father Cotter to take me to Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary because I needed more attention than he could give and instead of doing that, after filling 2 prescriptions, one for ear drops and one for pain medication, brought me back to the camp and I have lost the picture probably on purpose, but when we got back to the camp they were taking group pictures with everyone in their Boy Scout uniforms except me and I was in a blue sweatshirt so, it immortalized on film.</p>	<p>7:00</p>

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Other victims....	He then brought me to the infirmary and that night took me out of the infirmary to his tent and proceeded to molest and rape me most of the night.	8:00
No safe place....	Then in the morning when someone was approaching the tent he tossed me to the tent floor. I remember the person opening the tent door and (me) being on the floor just stunned stark naked. And it didn't seem to bother this person at all. Come to find out he was being molested as well. So this man's tentacles reached out to a lot of different families and he seemed to have a penchant for families with 3 boys.	
Threats....	And on the way home from that trip he again had me ride most the way with my pants down around my knees and (he) molested me. It wasn't until we got closer to my home, that I remember him warning me not to say anything to anyone. I think that is really the only time I remember him talking because I was under the influence of the pain medication so I wasn't as frightened, so that's why I remember it.	9:00
Missed red flags....	My mother related to me years later that when I got out of the car one of her friends whose family was also affected and was a school nurse and she had said that, "He looks a lot worse than somebody with just swimmer's ear." That was like a fleeting moment when the clouds opened and maybe if someone had taken the question just a tiny bit further he would have been found out then and I would have received the help I needed instead of the hell that I got.	10:00
Future triggers and painful memories....	He got into my house that way, because he pretended to care about how I was doing. I remember lying on the couch, my ears hurt and my mother asked him if he wanted a sandwich and she went in the kitchen to make him a sandwich. He started molesting me on the family couch. It's funny, that couch is still in my family. My nephew has it in his room. And I've never	

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<p>Perpetrator infiltrates young peoples organizations....</p>	<p>been in my nephew's room. I just cannot even fathom seeing that couch again although I could tell you exactly the colors that were in the threads. And the whole bit. WHEW. (This was difficult remembering for Robert.)</p>	
<p>Perpetrator exposed....</p>	<p>So Father Cotter was in the Boy Scouts, in the altar boys, in the CYO. He was everywhere. That was my world and I just couldn't escape it. I actually went to Boston College High School, totally crossed to the other side of the city, just to get the hell out of West Roxbury just to get away from him when I graduated from 8th grade.</p>	<p>11:00</p>
<p>Cover-up, conspiracy and geographic move....</p>	<p>He was eventually found out. Another family with 3 boys. The oldest boy was confronted regarding his relationship with his girlfriend and their sexual involvement and the boy blurted out (the mother's had said, I can't believe you're doing this and Father Cotter comes over here every Wednesday) and then the boy blurted out what was really going on and why Father Cotter was coming over every Wednesday.</p>	<p>12:00</p>
	<p>And so this woman being involved in Boy Scouts went to another leader and asked that leader not to say anything. And when she left that woman immediately called my parents and had them come over and I know my father the next day went up to.... my brother was getting ready to start a week of camping with Father Cotter... he went to the campsite of friends of ours in New Hampshire, ironically the same family of the school nurse. The father threw my father off his property and told him he wasn't welcome back because of what my father had said. He took my brother and left. By the time they got to the actual Boy Scout Camp in New Hampshire, Father Cotter was gone. So within 12 hours someone within the Scouts had alerted him to the fact that they were on to him. And I believe it had to be another pedophile because of the fact that we never found out who gave him</p>	<p>13:00</p>

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<p>Perpetrator exposed by other victim but still deny victimization....</p>	<p>warning instead of calling the police. Or they just couldn't believe that Father Cotter could be doing this.</p>	
	<p>I also remember in the back yard sitting on green and white striped itchy lawn furniture and my parents asked me if Father Cotter had ever touched me. I knew immediately to lie. It was an instantaneous thing. It was almost like I knew the question was coming before they asked it. This was after he had been found out. It just goes to the severe grooming that I went through, and our community as well, to be so caught up in it not to say anything to my parents, who are my safety net, when they asked me. It just goes to show that even your parents aren't safe. You become just emaciated with this person. You can't even trust your parents who are there to protect you.</p>	14:00
<p>Unspoken suspicions and/or knowledge....</p>	<p>I remember once asking my father if I had said yes, what would he have done. Would he have believed me? He said, probably not, but he would have made sure that I stayed away from Father Cotter, which would have meant being ostracized out of the community with the rest of my friends, everything.</p>	15:00
<p>Secrets abound within perpetrator's community and fear of exposure seals secrecy....</p>	<p>So I fully believe that some people knew what was going on or had suspicions, but didn't act on their suspicions. We found out years later that people in the church did have suspicions about what was going on. In any case of clergy abuse, I remember telling another priest at St Theresa's who was in charge of the CYO when I was in high school about it and he had sworn, used some foul language, commented, "Oh is that why he was always wearing his Boy Scout uniform.". So if adults had pushed even a little further to ask or to just think, maybe what a lot of us had gone through would not have happened. I think that the religious community, especially within the Catholic Church if they did suspect, said nothing because of</p>	16:00

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No safe place....	<p>their shortcomings. We know that a lot of priests were having relations with women in the parish, or adult men in the parish, or going to bars at night in plain clothes. If they had said something maybe their secrets would have been found out. So it was a very incestuous, secretive, disgustingly supported way of life.</p>	17:00
Suppression....	<p>You know there are plenty of incidences, and I really don't want to go into detail, but the fact that he got into my house meant that I was just not safe anywhere.</p> <p>It pains me to admit this now but I remember coming home from school and wishing with all my heart that my house had burned to the ground 'cause it just wasn't safe. It wasn't safe for me to be in it and I wanted out and I didn't know how. And the only thing that could come into my mind was if it was gone then I wouldn't have to deal with it. Running away and that sort of thing really didn't occur to me. What occurred to me was to play the game and keep the secret.</p>	18:00
Cover-up	<p>I kept it so well that in high school I was a member of my CYO and my senior year is was even the president. We had over 300 kids and it was a blast, let me tell you. What they didn't know was that I was out being promiscuous and drinking and drugging and all the rest. The cover and facade of a nice Catholic boy was just in keeping with his cover. I remember my mother relating a story to me saying Mrs. so and so had said she wished her boy could be like me. On the inside, I'm like, "Are you insane!" I didn't even want to be like me. It just was a testament to the lies and destruction these men leave behind and what they do to children as they grow older.</p> <p>He was found out. He was actually transferred to another parish in Beverly, Massachusetts ironically St Theresa's as well, where he continued even doing the Boy Scouts again. The Boy Scouts claimed not to know him, but we have photos of him actually on the altar surrounded by Boy Scouts receiving their eagle</p>	19:00

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<p>Over active sexual behavior....</p>	<p>awards and there are pictures of him. So we know that even the Boy Scouts didn't want to acknowledge knowing him but played an integral part of his deception.</p>	<p>20:00</p>
<p>Self-medicating through addictive behaviors....</p>	<p>So growing up was not a lot of fun for me. Running off to go to high school, just to get away from West Roxbury, all the way over to South Boston/Dorchester. It was my escape. They often tell you that children who are being sexually abused often turn into promiscuous young adults, teens. So one of the things I was able to do was I would go into Boston on my way home And, whether there was a sign on my forehead I don't know but it was easy for me to meet other men and continue to be taken advantage of without really knowing what was going on.</p>	<p>21:00</p>
<p>Vulnerability, despair, destructive relationships....</p>	<p>One of the other consequences is alcoholism and drug abuse. I remember being 7 or 8 years old and realizing that what my grandfather was drinking made him a little happier. So I started putting Old Granddad into Pepsi at age 7 or 8. Alcohol has been a major poison and destructive part of my life ever since. I have him to thank for that. I don't even want to know where he is buried because of what I might do.</p>	<p>22:00</p>
<p>Physical wounds....</p>		
<p>Shame and silence....</p>	<p>The individual incidences all add up to a hell of an upbringing. Going forward as a human being was not good for me. I fell into some wrong people and the first day of college, I was a mess.</p> <p>The night of my high school graduation I was brutally raped and mugged. And I believe now it was the direct result of the promiscuity. I had snuck my way into gay bars at the age of 16. It was a rough summer for me and I was internally pretty ripped up. As a matter</p>	<p>23:00</p>

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<p>Shame, isolation, and rejection....</p>	<p>of fact, I remember the nurse at the hospital begging me to tell her who had done this to me. But the secrecy factor that I had grown up with was just so imbedded and the shame around it that I couldn't. I remember going to this friend of mine from the CYO and telling him and just falling apart. And him telling me, for God's sake whatever you do, do not tell your parents until I can figure out what to do.</p>	<p>24:00</p>
<p>Manipulation, betrayal, minimization....</p>	<p>That night I went home and my mother had caught me in a lie and my whole world fell apart and I ended up blurting out the whole story. And she uh... She told me I had to move out of the room I shared with my twin brother since I came home from the hospital. My mother didn't think I was safe to be around him. It just added more shame and piles upon piles upon piles of stuff.</p>	<p>25:00</p>
	<p>I'd like to go back to one story. After Father Cotter had been discovered he disappeared for a while, but he came back. And the family with the school nurse and the cottage in NH called when it was dinner and asked my parents to come down. When they went there Father Cotter was there. As my mother relates the story, he was on bended knees crying and asking for their forgiveness because he thought I was the one who told since it was my father who had gone up to NH. My mother says he must have recognized the absolute shock on their faces because he stopped crying, stood up and told them it had only happened once while I was asleep instead of the years of abuse that I suffered. And my parents believed him and said nothing to me because they figured I didn't remember. If they hadn't believed him. If they had said something to me then maybe again I could have gotten the help I needed. You know it just shows what an evil bastard he was.</p> <p>And what really made matters worse, my parents were out of town thank God, the parish threw him a party because he was going to a new parish where he would</p>	<p>26:00</p>

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<p>Cover up, protecting perpetrator....</p>	<p>continue to do his dirty work again. But I can remember him standing at the top of the gymnasium there and on either side of him were these huge boxes all gift-wrapped. There was a line of people going out the door with envelopes full of money to thank him for his service to the parish. I joke now; it was like, "Thank you for raping my child, Thank you for abusing my daughter."</p>	
<p>Adult perspective on childhood experience....</p>	<p>It was just this horrendous act by the, as we now know, by the entire Roman Catholic Church of subterfuge and tricks and lies to make people forget or forgive or whatever you want to call it. They knew he was a pedophile. They knew he had been caught molesting children and yet they threw him this wonderful going away party. Instead of just disappearing, the façade had to be kept up that we were this organization that cares for children when they don't at all. I remember having to go and do that because I was involved in the parish and all. But I just remember being so heartbroken and sick. Yet still not being able to show it. I had to put that façade on because here was the rest of the parish and everything was going fine and there he was and somehow being absolutely petrified. The incestuousness of it all is mind-boggling.</p>	<p>27:00</p>
<p>Survivor strength....</p>	<p>These are memories. I remember these as an adult, not as a child. That's really important to emphasize, because as a child I didn't know what the hell was going on.</p>	<p>28:00</p>
	<p>Luckily or unluckily as the case may be, dealing with this as adults many survivors say, "If I had only said something as a child." But you're thinking that with the adult brain, not the child's brain. The child's brain is being attacked from all sides. I often tell people, we are some of the world's smartest people because we figured out how to survive when (rough moment) so</p>	<p>29:00</p>

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Lifelines....	<p>many others didn't survive this. And I really give myself a big pat on the back. We are intelligent and resourceful people. And even if the drugs and alcohol helped us then, we find out as an adult that it's no longer a safe place to turn to. That fact has dawned on me numerous times. But that we survived is a miracle.</p> <p>The third time I was arrested for drunk driving, I went into a day program to avoid going to jail. And I went in in-patient. Then the drinking really stopped because you couldn't really get it in the hospital.</p>	30:00
Effects of speaking out....	<p>That's when the nightmares came flooding back. That was in 1990-91. One of the nurses knew what was happening because none of the other doctor's knew what the hell to do with me and she gave me the name of a therapist. And for the next 13 years that therapist was my lifeline.</p>	31:00
Revictimization....	<p>(R very upset). I remember reading a Vanity Fair article about a boy, Christopher Schultz in New Jersey who killed himself; he was 11, because he was forced to confront his perpetrator in court. And he was found not guilty and he had to go back to school where this guy had got his job back. He swallowed entire bottle of wintergreen tablets or something like that. Only after it took Christopher Schultz's life did this priest admit what he had done. But it destroyed Christopher Schultz's life and his family's for no reason. I said to myself (R very upset) after reading that article, if I can say something to alleviate the pain and suffering of one little boy, then maybe it was all worth it. Or that's the reason why. That was back in 1992.</p> <p>Now it's 2012, so twenty years of this, I've seen some really horrible stuff. And I've seen some of the greatest joy and love and(difficult here)</p>	32:00
Refusing to be victim....	<p>It's amazing that when I was dealing with my stuff in the early 90's I got up the courage to sue both the Boy</p>	33:00

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<p>Activism....</p> <p>Threats, assault and denial....</p>	<p>Scouts and the Catholic Church. But I was too damaged to go through with both lawsuits. I just could not.</p> <p>The Boy Scouts said they never heard of him. They gave me \$1000 and I signed some stupid piece of paper saying I would never sue them again. That was abuse. That was the Boy Scout organization carrying on his legacy of abuse. Same with the church. The church used to make people sign gag orders. You couldn't say who did it, where it happened or how much money you got. Through my speaking out and remembering Christopher when my time came to sign the piece of paper I was able to tell them to go shove it because there had been articles in the paper saying who and where and how much wasn't anybody's business and believe me it wasn't a lot of money once the lawyers got their cut.</p>	<p>34:00</p>
<p>Self-care....</p> <p>Lies, blaming others....</p> <p>Confronting perpetrator/s....</p>	<p>That was early on and one of the things I got to do actually after I signed the documents was to meet with Cardinal Law because during this process St Theresa's had celebrated their centennial anniversary and I went and protested. I stuck little pieces of paper; parking ticket size, on the cars in the parking lot saying, "Stop sexual abuse by clergy". And I was assaulted in the parking lot by one of the custodians. I was threatened with arrest for starting a riot by the police. It was not the reaction I was expecting. And as a matter of fact it was even more damaging because I was realizing I'm not being believed which is what so many of us have had to deal with all our lives.</p>	<p>35:00</p>
	<p>When I met with Cardinal Law I was angry. There were 2 other survivors of Father Cotter that were supposed to come with me. When we met that morning one of the boys just couldn't do it. So this woman goes to the fact that child abuse is about power over a victim, not about sex, which the church tried to say; that it was gay priests.</p> <p>And that just invalidated all the girls who have been abused. And we know that there are thousands and thousands and thousands of girls who have been abused and suffered horrible acts. Another lie by them.</p>	<p>36:00</p>

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<p>Denial, institutional protection....</p>	<p>So we went in. I remember being angry and nervous and all the old tapes of..."this is a Cardinal and dadadadada". He shook our hands and said he'd like to start with a prayer. And, pardon my language, but I told him to, "Shut the fuck up and sit down." He looked at me and I said, "Do I need to repeat myself?" And he sat down. I told him that the years of... even the legal battles that I had to go through was his fault because the lawyers worked for him, he didn't work for the lawyers. I was getting a lot of anger off my chest. I also told him about being assaulted (in the parking lot). He turned to John McCormack who was his assistant at the time and who is now a bishop up in Manchester (NH) ...and he said, "Why don't I know this?" McCormack turned to the Cardinal and said, "We didn't think you needed to." And he threw McCormack out of the room and asked me what he could do to help me.</p> <p>I told him he was years too late, but there was a parish full of people who needed to be told the truth because they were living in lies. And he agreed to come to St Theresa's and say a mass of reconciliation and forgiveness. It was during Thanksgiving 1994-or 95, and he said a mass.</p> <p>He admitted from the altar that Father Cotter had indeed abused the children in the parish. I just remember feeling so hollow. Because it should have been a victory for hundreds of us that a Cardinal would say but it was just so hollow.</p> <p>I remember this one sister, Sister Monice, one of the second grade teachers after everything that had been in the paper; she still didn't know my name. She just called me one of the Costello twins. How sheltered must she be and what the hell did the priests do to the nuns? I can remember having to clean the blackboards because Father was coming across the parking lot to see the class. How they were lied to as well.</p> <p>But really it should have been some type of victory for me but it wasn't. I remember not wanting to go but not</p>	<p>37:00</p> <p>38:00</p> <p>39:00</p>
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<p>Power of community....</p>	<p>wanting to disappoint my mother as well. So it was a hollow victory.</p> <p>But 6, 8 years later, 2002 I swear it was the lawyers that got to Cardinal Law, to keep his mouth shut because they weren't in the room that day when he agreed to come back to the parish. So I really think it was the money and the reputation of the church that was at stake and the lawyers got involved. They just couldn't admit, they still have never been able to admit to the degree of what holocaust they visited on the children of this planet.</p>	<p>40:00</p>
<p>Being believed and supported....</p>	<p>So I thought I was alone. Then in 2002 when all of this stuff broke something inside me said, call and see what you can do. But I never ever, in my wildest dreams thought that what happened to me in 1992 would ever repeat 10 years later on such a huge scale. I can remember in the early, early days in Boston, the slurs and the insults hurled at us from the sidewalk in front of the church to today when we have Amnesty International ranking the Vatican as one of the worst nations for crimes against children. We have the World Court looking at holding them on counts of abuse against humanity. Never (difficult) would I have imagined that there were as many of us out there. In Boston, on the cold, cold mornings on the sidewalk or in the sweltering heat we had a great group of people that came forward that believed us and many of them are still there today, 11 years later. A lot of us survivors just can't do it or we just go by for a little bit.</p>	<p>41:00</p>
<p>Blaming...</p>	<p>It's a testament to the people in this city. I go elsewhere in the country and tell people about the times we had 200 people on the sidewalk and press. They say, "Oh my God, we could never get more than</p>	<p>42:00</p>

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<p>Coming to memory....</p>	<p>6.” It breaks my heart, but it’s still six people. We’re finally, finally being believed. I don’t think anyone will ever know the extent.</p> <p>We just had the John Jay report come out in 2011. It talks about the ‘60s and ‘70s sexual revolution being responsible for this. Yet we know that the earliest letter to the Pope was by St. Dominic in the year 309 regarding abuse of children. I have talked to people in their 80s who were abused in the 70’s.</p> <p>The founder, I forget the name of the religious order at the moment, I think it was out in Arizona, but he founded this hospital for the treatment of alcoholic priests but he ended up getting more pedophiles than alcoholics. He went so far as to put a down payment on an island because he knew there was no cure and that these men should just be put on an island where there were no children.</p> <p>He wrote letters to the Pope back in 1947. So for them to turn around and say that this is a problem of the 1960s and 1970s is a joke. And as someone said yesterday, “They’re trying to rewrite history.”</p> <p>And part of this Truth and Recognition program is to make sure they don’t rewrite history. It’s still painful to talk about a lot of this stuff. I hope more survivors and people in our related communities can come forward.</p> <p>But you know I never dreamed that there would be a BishopAccountability which maintains an archive of pedophile priests from around the world. And again there is this Amnesty International thing. We have come so far, yet we have so far to go. People are coming forward every day.</p> <p>The church wants you to believe that the crisis is over, yet we know that only when a person is ready, can they deal with their abuse. A lot of it is when they get sober, or when their children turn the age when they were abused. But it doesn’t happen until late 30s or</p>	<p>43:00</p> <p>44:00</p> <p>45:00</p>
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	<p>40s. In the history of the church the abuse has gone on for years and it is still going on. So what is going to happen for the child 10 years from now or only 5 years ago, they are still coming forward. Lawyers have dozens and dozens of people coming forward every year because they are only now realizing it.</p> <p>There are questions asked like, why didn't they come forward in 2002, when it was all over the news? If your brain is so programmed to avoid this at all costs, even the recognition of what's going on in the news doesn't click into your consciousness of what really happened. Like I said, I only remember him (Cotter) once talking to me. Those things are buried so deep in my head. Part of me wants it to come out. Part of me never wants to hear what he had to say.</p>	46:00
Suicide ideation....	<p>It was ok for his family to talk about his gay brother, but they refused to talk about him. It wasn't until his brother passed away did his widow contact me . . . and I have got to tell you being contacted by this man's family was rough, but pretty amazing at the same time. Because the secrecy and the attempt to hide, even in their own families when they knew that the person was a member of the clergy but also is a child abuser. They just couldn't talk about it. I'm still in contact with this person today; not always the easiest thing in the world. But it also goes to show how far we've come. I don't know of anybody else who is in contact with their perpetrator's family. I still get Christmas cards from her. She is the wife of Father's Cotter's brother; his sister-in-law. As soon as her husband died, she tried to contact me that week. She just knew. It kind of blew me away.</p>	47:00
Triggers....		48:00
Surviving....	<p>The stories that are coming out now, the brave men and women coming forward and for me too, it was a matter of survival, because we were going to drink ourselves to death or accidentally get killed on our</p>	49:00

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Triggers....	<p>way home one night. Early on in my therapy, on my way home, I used to drive by this wall and I can't tell you how many times I wanted to step on the gas and head for this wall and it would be over. I still have some of those feelings left today. I just don't want to do it. It hurts too much.</p>	
Spirituality....	<p>They had a beatification ceremony for Pope John Paul in Rome. That set me off. I went out and got smashed. I don't remember driving home. I was in an accident. The only way I know that was that the police called and told me I left my keys in my wallet at the police station. I didn't want to live. It triggered all the old emotions and the feeling of just wanting to be dead on the inside.</p>	50:00
	<p>I'm 49 years old. I've been dealing with this shit for 20 years. Some days are better than others. I talk with other survivors. They have good days and bad days. And then they have really bad days. And some of them don't make it. Me, I'm lucky. I have somebody watching over me.</p>	51:00
Triggers....	<p>In AA, they talk about God and spirituality, and I've got to tell you, that three-letter word used to piss me off. I have a hard time with it. The abuse has cut into my sobriety. You go to meetings, and you want to talk about it. People look at you like you've got eight heads, and you don't want to stand there at the end and recite a Christian prayer. It makes me want to vomit. Sometimes I leave sometimes I suffer through it.</p>	52:00
	<p>Long-term effects of this abuse are horrendous because it not only steals your childhood but steals your belief in God; and everybody has that right, no matter who you are or where you live. That's one of your rights. And we have it ripped away from us at such a young age. It gets so distorted. The ability to believe in anything is sometimes futile. Unless you've been through it, you have no idea what we're talking about. And be grateful that you don't.</p>	53:00

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Effects....	<p>One of the things they (AA) tell you is to get down on your knees and just say thanks and ask for help. Well getting down on your knees is not a fun thing 'cause you did it in church, or you had to do it in front of them. And either way, it is still degrading. Little acts like that just set us off. Whenever you hear a siren go off, my Mother used to say, "Say a Hail Mary." And even today that clicks in my head, and I get angry. For years, I refused to get down on my knees. That's probably why AA never clicked for me for so long. Instead of saying Higher Power or Spiritual Being, you go in the room and people are saying, "Thank God for this and thank God for that." For me, that's the nastiest three-letter word. I know they are not talking about a specific religion. That's just the word everyone uses.</p> <p>I've been doing this for 20 years. A lot of AA meetings are in churches or in Catholic hospitals. You see crucifixes. I spend half the meeting worrying about saying the Our Father at the end. And you just don't get half of what they are saying. Even as an adult, it's debilitating. What other people freely have was taken from us at such a young age. And people try; god do they try. And you don't want to tell them how horrible it is because you don't want them to have those images in their head.</p> <p>You keep going back to the image of [Redacted] lying on his bathroom floor dead at 11, because of something that a priest did. What is to some people is beyond comprehension, but it happened. And he's dead. He'll never laugh. He'll never play. He'll never have children. He'll never be the person he was intended to be. We are not the people we were intended to be. We have dreams that are unfulfilled. I never finished college. I feel less than. I never could really hold down a job, hold on to a relationship. I compare myself to my brothers and sisters sometimes, and it's just jet-black sheep. It's so difficult even now, with how far we've come.</p> <p>We haven't heard the stories from Latin America and Africa; from missions all over the world. We know these pedophiles have been sent there. It's absolutely amazing that the church continues to cover up and</p>	54:00 55:00 56:00
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	<p>thinks it can rewrite history in their own way. I find it interesting. If we were to write our own Bible, what people would be saying 30, 40, 50 years from now. I better wrap up there. Thank you for listening.</p>	
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