

Statement of Craig Martin

By Craig Martin

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Good morning, my name is Craig Martin. My presence here today represents a stop in what has been a very difficult and long journey for me, my family and others who are close to me. I speak today for myself and no one else.

Before I begin I would like to speak directly to the media in attendance. Today is a very difficult day for me. I ask you to respect my privacy and my family's privacy and let my statement today speak for itself. I need time after this. There may come a time when I will tell more of my story, but today will not be it. Thank you for respecting my wishes.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Conference of Bishops for inviting me to share my story today. Although this is extremely difficult and scary for me to do, my greatest hope is that I will be able to help others by sharing my story.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize three people:

- First, I'd like to recognize Father Kevin McDonough. Fr. Kevin, who I'll refer to simply as Kevin, is the Vicar General with the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. Kevin has assisted me most in this journey when he has taken off his collar, stepped away from being a Church executive, and dealt with me person to person. I thank him for those times. However, those times where the Church has forced him to wear his collar are times that I have felt conflict and felt alone. Those are times where I do not feel as though my Church wants to help me down this very difficult path.
- Next, I'd like to recognize David Clohessy. David is executive director of SNAP – the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests. He and his organization are very much needed. Survivors must be able to talk, to share, to rebuild, and to move forward. Thank you David and other survivors who have come forward to share their stories. Knowing that I am not alone provides comfort and hope for me. Thank you.
- I always save the best for last. I want to thank my best friend, my wife and my partner in this journey. Julie, thank you for your support and your love. I know that my pain at times has unfairly flowed into your life. Your faith sustains me, and it is the beacon that has helped lead me here today. Thank you. And I love you.

Next, I would like to share with you lyrics from a song. It has connected with me and it echoes

the despair I have felt and how my calls for help were ignored by my church. The song goes like this:

Hello darkness, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain, still remains
Within the sound of silence

In restless dreams I walked alone
Narrow streets of cobblestone
'Neath the halo of a street lamp
I turned my collar to the cold and damp
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light that split the night
And touched the sound of silence

And in the naked light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more
People talking without speaking
People hearing without listening
People writing songs that voices never share, and no one dared
Disturb the sound of silence

Gentlemen, I wanted so desperately to be heard. I wanted someone to listen to me. I wanted someone to help me. I wanted to break the silence and despair that was killing me. I wanted someone to hear my story.

I find it easier to tell my story using the name John Doe. I can revisit my pain and not hurt myself again. I found many different stories that have helped me to understand my suffering. I will share some of those today so others can be helped.

In John's late twenties, he meets his future wife Julie. This is a start to his recovery, yet John has no idea. John's wife brings him back to religion and also introduces him to a priest that helps in John's recovery. I wish I could say recovery started here but John wasn't quite ready.

A *Sports Illustrated* article from September 13, 1999 entitled "Every Parent's Nightmare," best describes why John was in a position to be hurt.

"While society has no trouble envisioning the violent molester and the child who is forced to submit to a sexual predator, many people are baffled by how adult seducers are able to get [kids] to go along with them voluntarily. These men seduce children, in this case boys, in exactly the same way that men and women have been seducing each other since the dawn of mankind. In other words, they flirt with them, laugh at their jokes, and shower them with attention, with gifts, with affection. They size up their weaknesses, their vulnerabilities, their

needs. They will target the kids who are more vulnerable."

The most amazing part of when I allowed John to talk about his abuser was how this man offered kindness and love; how this man became John's best friend. John showed very little anger toward his abuser. I was amazed at who John directed his sorrow to. He directed his sorrow not at his abuser, but at his parents. John tells a story of how his abuser wants to take John fishing. The abuser asks John's parents if it is OK. John's parents thought it was a great idea for John to go on a fishing trip with this Catholic priest. John talks of how his relationship with his parents changed, how he no longer trusted them. He feels he is alone.

Mom and Dad, I am terribly sorry for how I have treated you. I now know that I only have love in my heart for both of you.

A child who is being abused is put in a frightening and confusing situation. They may never have heard of anything like this happening. Nobody has told them it is right, but nobody has told them it is wrong. Everyone may like and respect the person who is doing these things.

Surviving Childhood Sexual Abuse, P. 57

John remembers the motel that night with the priest, but hardly anything else. John has no idea how he got home. It is only 35 years later that John is starting to remember that horrible night.

Abused children often hide their anger and distress from other people so that no one will suspect that they are being abused. They may also keep their feelings under control while they are being abused to protect themselves from feeling distress and pain or because they do not want the abuser to see how much he is hurting them. Many adult survivors continue to cope by blocking feelings and trying to forget about the abuse.

Surviving Childhood Sexual Abuse, p. 87

Survivors often have a low opinion of themselves and lack self-confidence and self esteem. They may feel worthless, useless and unlovable. Many survivors put on a "front" and present themselves as capable, cheerful and confident, while feeling wretched inside. Survivors may be so overwhelmed by their low opinion of themselves and lack of confidence that they may suffer bouts of depression, making them unable to act positively or find pleasure in things.

Surviving Childhood Sexual Abuse, p. 116

These words exactly describe John's feelings about his experience. John had become sexually active shortly after his abuse. John describes some very unhealthy attitudes toward women and admits to seeking out women in a predatory way. Alcohol also started to control John's life. It was many years before he finally sought help for alcoholism. Although sexual compulsivity and alcoholism had major effects on John, it was his need for self-esteem that kept him alive. John still admits today of having low self-esteem. John has shown symptoms of low self-esteem, depression, anger and the need to control. John has been able to survive, however, with the help

of his wife, children and therapy.

Wendy Maltz, in her book, *The Sexual Healing Journey*, has these words for John Doe. "Begin your journey only when you feel ready for it. Go slowly. Pace yourself. Trust yourself. Remember: This is your journey." These words help John Doe start peeling back the onion. This phrase applies to the layers of destructive behavior most people acquire to save their life. Many of these coping skills become very addictive by nature as they did for John Doe.

Many times people like John Doe must reach a low point in their lives before they can ask for help. John found that the pain was so intense in his life that the fear of being retraumatized was less threatening. Through organizations such as SNAP and other information resources, John has found out that he is not alone and has found ways to heal many different aspects of his life. Individual or group therapy is very important in John's life. Journaling is also a healthy way to confront the secrets of abuse as are 12-step programs, which John adheres to.

The secretive nature of male abuse has limited research. It is only recently that men have begun to seek help for sexual abuse. Since most men have ignored or have been unable to relate to their own abuse, this further hinders research. This situation of secrecy, coupled with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, has caused considerable problems for the reconciliation between the John Does and the Catholic Church.

Following are excerpts from a research paper I wrote for a class at St. Cloud State University. Exploring the steps taken by the Catholic Church in dealing with people like John Doe, I have found great discrepancies between Church and State. While the St. Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocese has made strides in the area of sexual abuse, I still have grave concerns about the Church.

I feel that the Church has decided the rules and how the game is to be played. I feel that the Church has shown its need for power with the court cases involving people who have been hurt by clergy. This is where the conflict between Church and state exist. The Catholic Church hides behind its lawyers and legal rights. The Church also tries to avoid damages caused by its own clergy. Finally, the Church wants authority to heal its own members and then make payments as to what they feel is appropriate to John Doe.

I'd like to read an excerpt from TIME Magazine to help people understand why this is more than just a physical violation of a child by a priest.

"For years most cases that made it to trial were civil complaints, but they were financially devastating, sometimes costing millions. Some dioceses adopted hardball legal tactics that abused victims all over again. Church lawyers attack the victims' credibility and besmirch their families. They bombard victims with as many as 500 written questions, demand 30 years' worth of tax returns, require names and dates for every doctor visited to age 12. They cross-examine mothers about their children's sex lives. As victim Lee White says, "It's intimidation, I feel like I'm being reabused."

Fr. Kevin McDonough and others recommend reconciliation versus litigation, yet which one is

protecting John Doe and which one is protecting the Church?

The Church cannot wear both hats into the arena of sexual offenders and try to heal those who have been abused because of such actions. The Church must acknowledge the magnitude of the damages.

Acknowledgement by the Church might be the first step that needs to be taken for people like John Doe to start their recovery process. A major issue facing the Catholic Church is the fact that it has tried to handle this problem internally for so long. This has only increased the secrecy and helped the Church continue to have control over those who have been hurt. Is the Church willing or able to give that type of power back to those who have been traumatized?

The Church must establish an independent resource for the healing of both victims and offenders. The health community, law enforcement agencies, and social service agencies can provide this service. Social workers can help in starting and continuing the healing process. Health professionals can administer necessary programs, and law enforcement can protect and enforce the rights of all parties involved. I feel that it is essential to people like John Doe that the Church be responsible for the actions of its employees.

In regard to any financial settlements, I feel that it is vital for the Church and John Doe to avoid litigation. This scenario will only retraumatize John and cause additional conflict among the members of the Church. These members are essential for stewardship and the funds needed to provide for the programs necessary to help all parties involved to recover. I would hope that a trust fund can be provided by the Church to establish the monies needed. An administrative board could handle these funds, with all concerned parties having access to the funds. A need basis account could be established for emergency situations. Establishment of this fund would extract some of the Church's power and show responsibility on the part of the Church.

In closing, I ask, "Can the Catholic Church respond in such a way to end harm caused by its employees? I firmly believe it can. You see, I am John Doe. I have made progress in my recovery and the Church has played a role in that. It's with my personal experiences that I can understand the pain and suffering of all those involved. I'm committed to helping other John Does and to helping the Church in finding solutions to an enormous problem. I can only hope and pray that the Catholic Church will find the way to admit its wrongs, ask for forgiveness from every person from every walk of life, and help them successfully continue their journey.

Thank you very much.

Sources:

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www.time.com

Mr. Martin, 46, was abused at age 11 by Fr. Joseph Heitzer, a priest at St. Peter's Church in Forest Lake, Minn. Mr. Martin is married. He and his wife Julie live with their three daughters in St. Cloud, Minn. He hopes to help others who have experienced sexual abuse and is seeking a degree in social work at St. Cloud State University.