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Guest Column: Who would want to believe?

By John P. Wirchnianski

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Part 1

"My wife just had a baby"—true, but this happened quite a few years ago...

"I was late to work because I had a flat tire"—not true because I always walked to work.
"My son Billy just hit a home run in Little League"—not true. I have a son, but his name is not Billy.

"Hey, Honey, I got the promotion..." True, but then I quit due to stress...

These are some statements that if shared with somebody would not be questioned, but why is it that we get a different response when a victim cries out for help and says "Fr. So And So sexually molested me?"

"I went to another priest in a confessional and told him about Fr. So And So molesting me, and the priest pulled me by the hair and threw me down the stairs and told me never to come back."

In your recent article, part five, this statement just blew me away!

"Determining if Father Feely, a Franciscan friar, did sexually abuse minors is one thing we may never know—he passed away in September 1991."

Say what??? I am not sure who is stating this statement, and maybe it is just an error, but we do know, and this is a personal insult to Mr. White! Even if Fr. Feely was still alive today, there would be a higher chance that he would be in deep denial and lie about it.

One of the major difficulties that a victim/survivor has is not being believed. When one finally has the courage to come forward, it is a terrible shame that once again the re-traumatization begins. It is no wonder most victims continue to stay silent.

Part 2

Earlier this year, I drove 2.5 hours toward Chicago for a support group for those "allegedly" sexually abused by priests. This was the first time I met Mr. White. My first response and thought in my head was "Carpool." We can ride together and support each other... The first time I met Mr. White, he told me his whole lifetime story and the abuse

in a mere 15 minutes... my jaw just dropped, and I did not want to believe it. Ah, and here is the difference... I myself am a survivor and I did not want to believe his story. This does not mean that his story is not true. I sometimes don't want to believe my own story, but I know it is true and do not care if you believe me or not. Why would I want to make such a thing up?

Part 3

Not everyone that a perpetrator has contact with is sexually abused. I was in the seminary for 12 years—high school, college and grad school. I knew a lot of priests, but I did not know of any abusive priests, well, not that that I knew of.... In the last two years, I have discovered about six priests whom I personally met and knew who have credible allegations of sexual misconduct against them. I never knew because I was never looking, and nobody warned me or wanted to tell me. I am still in shock.

Part 4

Perpetrator priests are extremely intelligent. Most have a master's degree and preach in the name of Jesus. How many of you out there are ready to admit that YOU have a drinking problem, have a gambling problem, look at Internet porn, etc.? Not too many. Yet most of us are highly educated individuals living in a society of extreme denial.

Part 5

Is it about money? No! But for me personally, there is nothing the church can give me right now. Maybe when I'm 89 and on my deathbed wondering if I'll go to Heaven or not. But not today... The pain is too great... Show me the money, and maybe, just maybe, I may have a glimmer of hope again in a God whom I thought loved me.

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