

The following is an email message written on January 1, 2003 by Father Tom Doyle to abuse survivors (found on page 563 of Our Fathers by David France):

"Some have asked me why I remain [a priest]. Others have asked how can I possibly remain and be honest. Others have heaped varying degrees of hostility on me simply because I am what I am. I understand all of these responses. I have never been more ashamed to be associated with the Catholic clerical structure or the institutional church. But, there is a difference between being a priest and being a priest/cleric. For some it takes quite a bit of inner struggle to see the difference and even more struggle to live the difference.

For me at least, the priesthood is no longer tied up with power, control, magic, pomp and ceremony. I don't own a Roman collar. I don't need one. Jesus didn't have one nor did the apostles nor did Mary or the other women who hung out with Jesus. It's all about the incredible power Jesus had when He showed compassion, understanding and acceptance of people. He reached out and loved the rejects of society. He didn't vaporize sinners, He embraced them. The only people He got really angry with were religious leaders and that was because they used people, hurt people and blasphemed in doing so.

Clericalism is a deadly disease. It's the virus that causes a priest's mind to become warped and twisted and truly believe that he is above others and has super powers, deserves special consideration and can get away with things others must answer for. Clericalism causes moral blindness. Clericalism causes addiction to power and control. Clericalism is basically why sex abuse victims were ignored and abusers covered up. Clericalism is why so many are still in denial. Some of the major carriers of this disease are laypeople who want to remain spiritual infants and have "father" tell them what to do and how to "be saved", whatever that means. These people are enablers. The only cure is reality and truth...

It's a new year. The primary source of support for my faith in the Higher Power has been the steady courage of the survivors. The most important single source of meaning for what priesthood is for me has been walking with survivors and trying to help them find justice.

A happy, successful and victorious 2003 to all. Tom"