

Mom and Dad,

I want to thank you for listening to me tonight when I called about the article in the Globe. I understand how difficult this whole thing is for you, and how difficult it would be for you to see my name in an article that talks about my being abused by Birmingham. I understand because it was that same sense of shame and embarrassment that kept me quiet for 30 years, and that would have kept me quiet for the rest of my life if it wasn't for the fact that Hartley opened up the doors of the vault where I had been hiding my secret by asking me directly what had happened to me. At that moment I couldn't duck the truth any longer, as I could see clearly how much harm my silence had brought to our marriage. For all those years that I kept my secret, I lived with the fear that someone would find out what happened to me, and that they would think there was something the matter with me, that it had been my fault, and that I would be treated like an outcast. But instead what I found was that when people learned what had happened, they helped me to see that there was nothing to be ashamed of, that what happened had been done to me, and was not something done by me. That the more I was able to bring things out into the light of day, the more I felt healed, and the more support I was given by people.

I believe that anyone you know who might read my name in the Globe will feel the same way toward you, that is, they will give you their support, and that it will help you to overcome any feelings of embarrassment that you have about this. And if they can't do that, then that is their own problem and not yours. You have done nothing wrong. I have done nothing wrong. It is the church in the guise of its priests and bishops that have done wrong. And they have counted on people like you and me to feel too ashamed and frightened to speak the truth as a way of protecting themselves. This is how they have gotten away with this stuff for so long – they knew that the people they were hurting would not speak out, and that in remaining silent they would build a brick wall of defense for the

very people who were betraying them. They knew just how much power they have over us when we take on the burden of their sins and turn it into our feelings of shame. When people like Sister Grace and Mary Carrete (the mother of one of the boys who Birmingham abused at St James) went to the archdiocese to complain, they were told that they were wrong to do that, that they were slandering a priest, and that they should remain silent and let the bishops handle things. And that has been the story with countless others who have put their faith and trust in these men in black. The priests and bishops knew just how much power they had over their parishioners, and they used it to protect themselves, instead of following the commandments that they so piously preach in their fancy robes.

When Birmingham abused me, he also abused you. And when McCormack and Law and all the others in charge did nothing but move him around to other parishes where he could find new boys to prey on, they committed even greater abuses of faith to all of us. There's no telling how many families have been living with these dark secrets between sons and parents, and how many of those relationships have been damaged. I'm sure there are plenty of others that Birmingham got to who are still living in the dark, just as I did until only 8 years ago. And that is why I want this article published – to help shed some light on the fact that this guy was out there doing his dirty deeds while his superiors were protecting him. And if my name appears and someone from Salem recognizes it and realizes that this happened to someone real whom they knew and it spurs them to start asking questions that may bring other information out, then maybe there will be some good to come out of what I went through. All those years when I lived in silence I believed that I was the only one, and let me tell you that was a very lonely feeling. If someone sees my name and it gives him or her the courage to speak out, then I do believe that is worth any possible embarrassment that you or I may feel. And as I said, the embarrassment is only in our minds – anyone that would point a finger of blame or shame at you or me

or who would take the church's side would hardly be someone worth being considered as a friend.

Because the Globe article has come up as a big surprise for you, and you have had no time to think it over, I agreed that this article would not have my name in it. But the reporter I spoke with indicated that she would like to do another article that goes into more depth with the information that I gave her, and if that is the case my name will need to be used. For the reasons I have explained, I believe it is important that that article be written, and that my name be used. Also, other men and women that I directed the Globe to speak to have agreed to have their names used, and I feel it would ultimately be cowardly of me to remain anonymous. I hope that if you have some time to think this over you will understand why I believe this to be true.

None of us wanted this to happen, and I'm not anxious to dredge these things up again and to have my name associated with them. But I have found that even when the truth makes me uncomfortable, sticking with it and speaking it is the surest way to end up feeling at peace. I hope you can understand what I'm feeling, and that we can help each other to lift this curse of Birmingham off of us.

Love,  
Paul