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## Frontline

LIVE ONLINE with Filmmakers and Producers from the PBS Series

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*Joe Cultrera*  
Producer, Writer and Director  
Wednesday, January 17, 2007; 11:00 AM

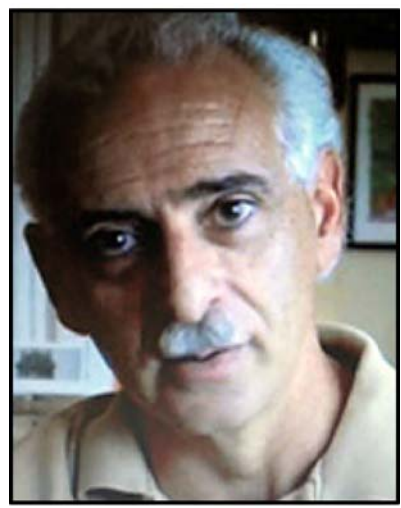
Producer, writer and director **Joe Cultrera** was online **Wednesday, Jan. 17, at 11 a.m. ET** to discuss the PBS Frontline film "[Hand of God](#)," a look at his family's experience with sexual abuse by a member of the Catholic clergy.

He will be joined by his brother, **Paul Cultrera**, who was the victim of the abuse.

Frontline's "[Hand of God](#)" airs **Tuesday, Jan. 16, at 9 p.m. ET** on PBS (check local listings).

**Joe Cultrera** has more than 25 years of experience as a director and editor. He has directed films including *Witch City*, *Leather Soul* and *Unfinished Dreams*. He has edited projects for the Rolling Stones, PBS, A&E, Discovery, Court TV and other outlets.

**Paul Cultrera** was born in Salem, MA and now resides in Sacramento, California where he is the manager of the Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op. He has been involved in the Natural Foods industry since



Paul Cultrera today. (Courtesy PBS Frontline)

TODAY'S LIVE DISCUSSIONS

the early 1980's.

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**Scottsdale, Ariz.:**1. It has always been a question in my mind how someone could be abused more than once. Where is their family, etc.? Here, strong family ties seemed to have worked against you. This still puzzles me. On the other hand (I do not mean to trivialize in any way what happened to you), I went from fifth grade to seventh needing glasses and unwilling to tell my parents because they had always told me not to hold books so close to my face or I will need glasses. That is, it was my "fault" that I needed glasses. So I can see the problem a little bit. Even so, this was not something you did but a terrible thing that was done to you. An unsettling documentary.

2. I hope that you can see your way to returning to the sacraments. The human side of the Church is often ugly. The divine side is not. Don't forget, there are two sides.

3. I recently published a book, one of the theses of which is that there is a priest shortage because there are no spiritual leaders. Without leaders, how can there be followers? Obviously, the book is a critique of the U.S. Catholic bishops. I found it interesting that you talk about the bishops not having the right to preach. In the book I mention that as a former catechist, each year I had to earn the "right to be heard" with my class and that the bishops have authority but not the right to be heard. They have not earned it.

**Paul Cultrera:**1) I can only answer your first question for myself. As the film hopefully portrays, the environment in which I grew up did not foster dialogue about sex, and the whole topic was taboo. Throw in the ambiguity brought on by the perpetrator having been a man and the confusion that would bring to an adolescent male and you have a little more of the reason why I stayed silent. Also there was the fact that I was in all my naivety at the time still under the influence of the teachings that I had received since age 5 that the sacrament of penance -- which was the pretext that Birmingham used to get to me -- was a private matter and what went on within it was to be kept in silence.

2) I believe there are many ways to the divine and that the Catholic church and its sacraments, while they may work for many (and I am glad for that), are not the only way to connect to it. I see more divinity in my garden than I ever did in the church and I'm not sure I could ever get past the associations that the scent of incense brings up for me.

3) I agree.

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**Philadelphia:** Why do people like your parents continue to believe in and look for moral guidance from a church whose leadership has engaged in and supported such widespread immorality?

**Joe Cultrera:** My parents are 88 (Mom) and 92 (Dad). They've been walking this walk since birth. I asked my Dad to consider an alternative and he said, "Look, I'm at the end of my contract here." He's basically afraid to cash-out at this point after having invested so much of himself in this route of belief.

Their faith has changed as a result of what happened to Paul and their church. They now go to church to access God in the same manner they always have. But they do not look at the church the same way. They do not look at priests for guidance. My Dad has said that Mass is now more like just habit, it has lost a lot of meaning for him.

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**Washington:** Although I am about as far from a papal defender as possible (I'm an atheist), it strikes me that the Catholic Church has taken a bigger hit on the issue of abuse within its ranks than other major religions -- some of which actually seem to sanction abuse through various cultural practices (Islam comes to mind with its practice of child brides or the well-documented homosexual abuse of boys by teachers in madrassas). Why is this? Can we expect an equally exhaustive expose about child abuse in other (non-Christian) religions?

**Joe Cultrera:** We grew up Catholic and this is our experience. We will leave it to others to talk about the rights and wrongs in their own faiths. I have no control on what other filmmakers make or broadcasters broadcast. Believe me, it was a struggle to get this to the air. Thank all the Gods for FRONTLINE. Speaking of which -- more info can be found here:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/handofgod/>

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**Corpus Christi, Texas:** I am sorry for your brother's abuse and all the pain he and your family have suffered. This has not been my experience with the Catholic church -- it is a bunch of human beings trying and many times failing to do God's will. I love my Catholic faith -- it is a tremendous comfort to me and in spite of all the perverts and other sinners there, I do believe it is Jesus' one true church and survives because of the Holy Spirit's guidance. Sorry you are so bitter and have to blaspheme in your film, I was very

offended by that. I am not an ignorant, superstitious, guilt-ridden person as you label people in my church. I am praying for your healing and peace.

**Paul Cultrera:** I'm sorry if you were offended by any blasphemy on my part. Perhaps you can understand that any of that may come from the experience that I had encountering the lies and hypocrisy that were presented to me by the leaders of the archdioceses of Boston. I make no claim to be anything other than a human being with all the load of failings that humans have, including the occasional blasphemous remark. The bishops etc., behind their vestments and the power of their office, commit, in my opinion, the truly blasphemous actions when they choose to protect themselves instead of helping those whose souls they supposedly care for.

I do not believe that all people who practice the Catholic faith are ignorant, superstitious and guilt-ridden. My parents, sister and many other members of my family still participate as Catholics, and I do not hold them in scorn.

As for healing and peace, I have found much of that through my relationships with my family and friends. It is in those relationships that I have found truth and honesty, as opposed to what I found from the Catholic hierarchy.

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**Florida:** I truly am sorry for you and for those who are abused in all walks of life ... I pray for an end to those who commit such crimes. But for every story about a priest who has abused a child, there are literally a million stories about a priest, a nun or the Church itself regarding good, charity, giving, sacrifice for all who suffer around the world ... as Jesus said, "my Church will be filled with sinners."

**Joe Cultrera:** No argument here. Our film is our story. Unfortunately many people (thousands) have similar stories. I have great respect for people in and out of the cloth that do good works. Our gripe is with the fact that many people in power positions in the Catholic organization (see some bishops in the film) are still in the organization. They protected and enabled molesters. The church continues to protect them. Why?

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**Alachua, Fla.:** Hi, I'm a beginning filmmaker. I really liked your film. I'm sorry to Paul that he had these bad experiences. I'm so naive that I give the church the benefit of the doubt. But in your film you show their true colors. Your film is very important because it helps people. Frontline always has the best presentations.

Yesterday, I interviewed a woman whose son was abused while at a Krishna school. Until I saw your show I thought it would be too negative to do a film focused on this topic. I worry that many people won't like it -- I also won't like it. Now it seems to me that telling the story helps to clear the air. I prefer to hear the joyful news not the bad news, but we can't stay in denial. We must clear the air if we hope to grow.

Do you have any insights or advice for me so that I might do a better job of handling this sensitive topic. I want to do it for the victims, to hopefully help them heal, perhaps in some small part to apologize. Any advice? Thanks. Keep up the good work.

**Joe Cultrera:** People may not like it -- but those are not the people you are making the film for. Not all films can be filled with Happy Feet. It is important to talk about this stuff -- it will help many people. Forge on but be sensitive to your subjects -- spend much time talking and bonding before filming. Do not force the issue. You will know when it is the right time to turn on the camera. Do not manipulate the situation.

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**Portland, Ore.:** In July 2006 my 42-year-old son revealed to our family that he was abused sexually by our parish priest 25-plus years ago. How can I persuade my son to come forward to the Archdiocese and reveal what happened to him? He is ashamed etc.

**Paul Cultrera:** I can certainly understand your son's reluctance to come forward. Perhaps one way to help him get over his sense of shame would be to have him watch Joe's film. A number of people who have seen the film have told me that it helped them to understand that they are not alone. I would also be happy to communicate with your son to give him any encouragement that I may be able to give. You can tell him that my life has changed for the better since the day that I began to be willing to talk about all of this.

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**Cleveland:** Joe, I have worked for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland for over 18 years. I am searching for employment elsewhere because of my disgust and dismay with the way the church has (or hasn't) handled important issues like the sexual abuse scandals. Unfortunately, Richard Lennon is bishop of my diocese. I am so angry from his response to you in the film. It is so typical of how so many clergy have responded. Instead of "falling on the sword" and admitting wrong, these "leaders" respond with aggression and threats instead of compassion and apology.

Now, Lennon is bishop of my diocese. I want him dismissed but I feel like the Roman Catholic church is similar to a mafia with nowhere to turn. To whom can I turn (inside and outside of the church) to voice my concern?

**Joe Cultrera:** Wish I could tell you. The deeper I moved into the making of this film the farther I moved from the institution. I would start on the outside -- with folks from Voice of the Faithful. They are Catholics with concerns. Perhaps they know of some caring priest to talk to.

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**Paul Cultrera:** Good morning. Joe and I are here to reply to your questions. There are many of them so I hope we can get to as many as possible.

Paul

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**Winston Salem, N.C.:** The imagery underlying the dialog added a lot to the impact of the story. Did you design and shoot those images with very specific dialog snippets in mind (e.g. the figurine crushed by the vise), or was it less orchestrated than that?

**Joe Cultrera:** Some were designed to fit dialogue. Others came from just Hugh Walsh (our brilliant Director of Photog) and me playing around. The vice was in my parents cellar. One thing lead to another. I knew it would have a place.

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**Arlington, Va.:** Hello -- I caught the last half of the documentary last night -- it was incredible and made me so angry. What is the status of the Bishop (is it McCormick?) in Vermont who was the enabler of the molester Father Birmingham, and how can the Catholic Church justify having him in power?

Also what an arrogant and telling reaction from the priest who came out to try and stop you from filming the outside of the diocese building -- and shockingly it turned out to be the new Bishop of Boston. What has been the fallout to his unbelievably un-Christian and uncharitable strong-arm tactics? How can he still have a job? Did your parents think of suing to take back their church? Was it sold for real estate/condos? Fantastic Work! Keep shining the light into still dark places. And congrats to your whole family (particularly your brother) for their courage in coming forward with this story.

**Joe Cultrera:** FRONTLINE has updates on a lot of this on the web

pages they have built about the film -- go to:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/handofgod/>

McCormack is still the Bishop of Manchester, NH. I don't know how he or the Church justifies his present office.

Bishop Richard Lennon (who called me a "sad little man") is now in charge of the Cleveland, Ohio Diocese -- the Bishop of Cleveland.

My parents and neighbors were heartbroken about losing their church but did not have the means or the cunning to sue. The archdiocese sold the church and property for over 2 million dollars to another denomination that uses some of the buildings to house homeless and recovering addicts. . The main church is now unused -- locked up, the chapel downstairs is used as a thrift shop.

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**Prairietown, Ill.:** When did Birmingham die? And did Paul ever get the chance to confront him? Is there any update to the film? Finally, when it is said that Law is head of a basilica, can you explain that for us non-Catholics? Thanks. Terrific film.

**Joe Cultrera:** Check here for updates on the players involved:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/handofgod/>

Law is still a Cardinal -- in charge of a major Basilica (church, parish) in Rome. He votes for popes and remains a candidate for that office. Supposedly he actually received one vote in this past Papal election. The joke going around is that he voted for himself.

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**Cape Charles, Va.:** Joe, great film! Paul, great courage! Paul, the similarities in our lives are extraordinary as I too was a victim, not at the hands of my priest, but my uncle. How do you deal with the concept of faith now? Do you attend church? Do you still believe in God and the eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven?

**Paul Cultrera:** No, I do not attend church, except for weddings and funerals. As for "God and the eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven", when it comes to god I honestly prefer not to limit myself to one. I see many gods in the world, and I don't mean the my-god's-better-than-your-god kind of god that separates Christians from Muslims from Hindus from Jews and that mentality which has caused so much bloodshed through the centuries. I mean the gods that I see in the air, the water, the wind, the soil, the plants that grow etc. I get my faith from people and from knowing that despite all the traumas and tragedies that we all experience there is the

possibility that we heal a little and move on and help each other.

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**Alexandria, Va.:** How did you find out about the abuse your brother suffered?

**Joe Cultrera:** He called and told me. He was starting his investigation and asked me to help him. This is explained in the film.

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**Philadelphia:** When you were young, did parents instill in their children the notion that priests were the embodiment of Christ? I ask because it seems so many predators knew the safety this gave them, and how it would protect them even from suspicious parents: How could they be questioned when faith taught that they were all powerful and anything they did had to have been done so for some almighty reason? I think it was sick, but that was the comfort these predators took.

**Joe Cultrera:** We were taught that they were the "Hand of God." That's where the ironic title comes from -- those hands were also doing things they shouldn't with young boys AND girls; while other hands shuffled papers that created more opportunities for the perps. Having the power that they did instilled great protection. Additionally we were taught embarrassment and shame about all things sexual -- this was a great shield -- they knew we would not talk about this sinful stuff. But we have no grown older and wiser.

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**Washington:** In the documentary you mentioned that the number of priests from the seminary class of 1960 ultimately guilty of sexual abuse/molestation was rather high. What contributing factors led to the scale of this problem in the Boston area?

**Paul Cultrera:** First, I don't think this was strictly a Boston problem. The Boston Globe's work in uncovering much of the problem in Boston brought a lot to light that happened there and the class of 1960 happens to have been somewhat of a poster child for pedophiles and enablers. But the problem of sexual abuse by Catholic priests is widespread (as is the problem of sexual abuse in general). In the case of the Catholic church, it appears to me that priests with any inclination toward abusive behavior will have learned early on in their careers, if not back in the seminary, that the behavior was condoned by their superiors and that the only consequence for their actions was a weak slap on the wrist and a transfer to a new parish -- which was sort of a gift since it allowed



them a whole new crop of victims. My abuser began his molestations as soon as he was assigned to his first parish, almost as though he had received instructions on how to go about it while in the seminary. In talking to other men who were abused by priests, it's remarkable how similar the methods that the various priests used to get at their victims. I believe that it has been the desire of the hierarchy to perpetuate the image of the priesthood as something sacred and above the level of the "flock" that led to their complicity in trying to keep all of the abuse locked up behind closed doors, and that the rot starts at the top.

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**Philadelphia, Pa.:** 1. Isn't it true that the church that was suppressed had a very small, mostly elderly, membership and that the closing was not in way (as suggested in the film) retaliatory?

2. Wasn't it this closing what the Bishop was referring to when he remarked that the filmmaker couldn't make him feel bad about it? Why were his remarks edited?

3. What exactly transpired between the accused priest and the subject of the film? We saw the subject standing in front of a building and heard him say that "it" happened there but we never heard what "it" was. Gestures? Fondling? Masturbation? Penetration? What happened? We never learned.

**Joe Cultrera:** The church was built, funded and continually supported by the community that it was taken from. It was a smaller community than it once was but it was still their church and they were self-supporting. In fact they had just done repairs, bought a new organ, etc. It was not JUST old folks, but the older folks who did attend wanted to live out their Christian life and death there. They wanted to have their funerals in the place that they and their parents built. If your parents had a large family and then their children move out of the house they built, do you take them out of that house just because the population of that house is smaller and your parents are older. Do you place them in the street?

I explained to Bishop Lennon why I was at the Chancery, what had happened to my brother there (it was where he reported his abuse) and why I felt compelled to shoot the outside of the building. He wanted me to stop. His reaction was about my brother's abuse - I had not yet worked my way up to the story of my parent's church. I edited out his reply to my statement about what I had done for the church (fundraising) and that my parents had put so much money and so much of their souls into the church. His reply to this was "You have given Nothing, your parents have given nothing, it is all in your head sir, you're a sad little man -- sad little man."

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**Pleasantville, N.Y.:** I just joined the discussion so I don't know if this question has been asked ... It is apparent that both moral and legal rules/laws have been broken. The Church until recently has ignored the moral aspects (or even sins committed), but what about the legal aspects of these cases? How many of the clergy has been accused and arrested and tried? Where were the legal protections for these children?

**Joe Cultrera:** Bishop Accountability.org is a great site for articles about the whole crisis -- you can read more about what has been done:

<http://www.bishop-accountability.org/>

Our film is less statistical than others. We just wanted to give you a view from the inside of how it affects one family and changes their views on things.

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**St. Louis:** Paul, have you considered joining a congregational Catholic church, where the people have custody of the church and sacraments, and where there is no clergy?

**Paul Cultrera:** If I ever felt the need for a church, then one with no clergy would be the first one I'd look for. If it had to have clergy, there would have to be women allowed. But, honestly, I have not felt any absence in my life due to not being a member of any organized religious congregation. The closest I come to a congregation is the natural foods cooperative that I manage -- an economic institution that builds a sense of community around one of the great things in life -- food. And even that sometimes starts to feel a bit too much like a "church" for my comfort level.

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**Westbrook, Maine:** As a former Catholic nun of 17 years, it continues to dishearten me that so many people do not accept that the church hierarchy continues to get away with cover-ups. Do either of you see that changing if federal congressional hearings take place in 2007 and new laws result?

**Joe Cultrera:** Miracles are possible -- but only through concrete work by organizations like these:

<http://www.voicesofoutrage.com/>

<http://www.amatteroftruth.org/>

Please check out these sites and support their activity. And pray if that still works for you.

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**Bethesda, Md.:** Why do you think there's so much focus on this subject with respect to the Catholic Church, but almost none with regard to the vastly greater problem of such abuse in U.S. public schools (estimated to be double or more the rate per adult and a much larger child population)?

**Paul Cultrera:** Perhaps because people have a greater sense of outrage and betrayal when the perpetrator and his enablers are the same people that profess to have the moral high ground and who literally dress themselves in the robes of sacred power. If the local math teacher turns out to be an abuser no-one can say that his claim to know the square root of 221 was something that he used to portray himself as a pillar of god's word.

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**Ho-Ho-Kus, N.J.:** I am wondering whether Joe Cultrera has any personal theory about the cause of the phenomenon of child abuse by Catholic priests?

**Joe Cultrera:** Only in that there is obviously a lust for power in many of these men (No, not all priests). The ones that are addicted to this power will do anything to hold onto it. Sexual abuse is about power, not sex. It seems to fit.

You also have young men entering the seminary at a time in their life when they are learning about their own sexuality -- then they suppress that sexuality. It seems to lead to no good. Altar boys come under their control -- they are easy targets.

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**Monrovia, Calif.:** Great film. Sorry about your experience. I am an ex-Catholic, now atheist on purely philosophical grounds. Did you encounter *anyone* in the church hierarchy who dealt with this situation with integrity? They all seemed to be slippery weasels.

**Joe Cultrera:** I met a handful of really good priests along the path of showing this film in film festivals and elsewhere. A handful. I know there are others. I invited clergy in every city we showed the film (about 20) -- emailed, wrote, called, knocked on doors. Less than 10 showed up. I got a letter from the Cardinal of Boston -- O'Malley -- saying he appreciated my attempt to create discussion. An email from the Bishop of Worcester along the same lines. They would not come see the film or send a rep, but they did acknowledge its existence. I got a nice email from a priest last

night, and an amazing one from an Orlando priest many moths ago.  
But this seems a drop in a large bucket

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**Greenbelt, Md.:** Good morning Paul. I thank you for your courage and strength. We here are clear that the crimes which were perpetrated against you and all other survivors of priest abuse, your families, and the bodies of faithful believers who have been lied to and ignored by the Church hierarchy are grievous. I would like to know your view on these two issues: What effect have these crimes by priests had upon the gospel message of Jesus Christ, the entire Church at large? What if any difference do you believe would exist if priests could be married?

**Paul Cultrera:** If priests could marry, I think there would be a very different crop of men applying to the priesthood. Allowing priests normal relationships with women (and better yet, allowing women to be priests) would certainly go a long way to breaking down the misogyny that underlies a lot of what percolates under the surface of this whole problem of clergy abuse. Bottling up male sexuality behind the vestments is one surefire way to create a problem.

As for the effect on "the gospel message of Jesus and the church at large," I'm sure there has been plenty of damage. Though I don't feel any particular need to go to the gospels for guidance (and enough of it was drummed into me through 17 years of Catholic schooling that there is plenty of residue) I would hope that people who do want what is there in those teachings will be able to separate what is there from the abusers and enablers. As well as that they be able to maintain respect for the priests, nuns etc. that are entirely innocent of these crimes and who now have to work in the shadow of what has been allowed to mar their commitment.

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**Ulster, Pa.:** Joe and Paul -- were you surprised that Lennon came out himself? I was amazed that he was the one who approached you -- that was stellar filmmaking to get him on tape, saying what he did. What a pathetic man he is!

**Joe Cultrera:** Before he came out a lay person who worked in that office came out on his way home. He asked me what we were doing. I gave him the same reply I gave Lennon. His response was "I'm so sorry. How is your brother doing? How are your parents? Are you or they getting therapy?" He was quite compassionate and was fine with us filming there. Then -- about 15 minutes later -- out came the Bishop. Different attitude. Who is the holy one?

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**Myrtle Beach, S.C.:** Paul, your brother captured a very thuggish quality in the priests who presided over the last mass at St. Mary's Italian Church. My question to you: did you ever feel (or were you ever) threatened by the church after the truth came out? Thank you for your courage and I thank you and your family for sharing your ordeal!

**Paul Cultrera:** I can't say as I have felt threatened. I'm not one to underestimate the power and the sinister workings of the Catholic hierarchy and their attorneys (having sat across the table from one of their bishops and his legal counsel and endured their lies and cold-heartedness during the process of receiving my settlement), but what we presented in the film was as true as I know to make it (much of what I found out about the way things were dealt with came out of the diocesan files), and there's not much to fear from the truth. But if you hear about a California grocer who suddenly disappeared, you might want to check under the dome of St. Peter's, or maybe call Dan Brown.

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**Wainscott, N.Y.:** How did you get the interview and commentary from Fr. Laurano that was so utterly amazing and the only response on the motivation from a perpetrator, which was nearly disbelieving in its cynicism?

**Joe Cultrera:** We were at a party that the people from the Italian neighborhood had organized. We asked him if he felt part of the neighborhood. It was quite a startling response and one that I have kept on my shelf for many years -- it was burned into my brain -- long before I knew about this crisis or Laurano's own abuses. People thought he was arrogant back then and there was some very valid reasons to suspect he had taken money from the church...but nobody suspected why we really should, as he says, "Watch out for him."

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**Myrtle Beach, S.C.:** Paul, did you discover any of your friends at St. James that had the same problem with Birmingham as you did?

**Paul Cultrera:** None of my friends claim to have had the same problem, and that is probably one of the reason why I never suspected there were other victims and thought I was the only one. However a number of men (boys back then) who were at St. James after I graduated from there did come forward after the Boston Globe broke their story in 2002 to say that Birmingham abused them. They, along with other Birmingham victims from other parishes, formed a support group called the Survivors of Joe Birmingham, and the meeting that they organized and invited John

McCormack to was featured in the film.

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**Charlottesville, Va.:** Thank you for the film and for your brother's courage in coming forward. Why haven't there been criminal charges against McCormack or a civil suit against him and others responsible for moving these predators from parish to parish and giving them access to young boys?

**Joe Cultrera:** There's more info on this [here](#). Also on the [Bishop Accountability site](#).

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**Maine:** Has there been research into the abuse by Nuns in the Catholic Orphanage system of the 50's and 60's ?

**Joe Cultrera:** Don't know about whether there has or not. I only know that in fifth grade, Sr. Margaret St. Anthony hung me upside-down by my ankles during music class. This was punishment because I wasn't singing (I was a painfully shy kid). Paul thinks my next film should be about nuns and called "Ankles of God."

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**Seattle:** My quibble is not with you, but with PBS, and other media outlets. Guys, *we get it*. Every network wants to have its shot at the Catholics. Enough already. The church has paid/is paying/will continue to pay a huge price for this (as it should). But it ain't the only abuser in the world.

**Paul Cultrera:** You are right, the Catholic church is not the only organization with abusers in its ranks. It has, however, continued to promote to positions of power the men who enabled the abuse, and has refused to remove them in the face of overwhelming evidence (found in his own files) that these men covered the truth up for years. John McCormack is still bishop of Manchester NH, and Bernard Law was rewarded with the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, one of Rome's 4 major churches. Joseph Ratzinger, before he became pope, was in charge of keeping these cases quiet. I believe that any organization that harbors abusers should be brought to light, and since my experience was with the Catholic church that is where I aimed my beam.

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**Washington:** Because of the frequency of sexual abuse cases involving priests, would you say there is more transparency to the issue? And if so, why is the Church not investigating every claim

and putting the suspected priest on leave until the claims are verified or declared false?

**Joe Cultrera:** I don't know why. I think they are doing better with this now -- now that the spotlight is on them. But many of the caretaker Bishops and Cardinals are still in the loop. This situation is not over until their complicity is addressed. We can't out it behind us (as many ask us to do) until they put it in front of them.

**Joe Cultrera:** I don't know why. I think they are doing better with this now -- now that the spotlight is on them. But many of the caretaker Bishops and Cardinals are still in the loop. This situation is not over until their complicity is addressed. We can't put it behind us (as many ask us to do) until they put it in front of them.

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**Ft. Myers, Fla.:** Do you see the Catholic Church covering up the next emerging crisis, i.e., homosexuality in the priesthood and the rampant homosexuality in their seminaries? Isn't this another effort to protect the organization at all costs?

**Joe Cultrera:** Is this a crisis? Maybe they should just be honest about it and say, "Yes, there are a large percentage of homosexuals in the priesthood. We are accepting of good caring individuals of all types that want to do God's work." The hypocrisy is what is odd -- gay priests and hierarchy serving in an institution that says homosexuality is evil. Not sure how they reconcile what they are and what they believe.

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**Alabama:** Good work on the film. What did you think of The Boston Globe's coverage of the scandal?

**Joe Cultrera:** It helped a lot of people and the survivor community and their families and all caring people should be grateful. Maybe it's me, but lately I have suspected a bit of a backslide with the Globe -- as if they are being overly nice to the church in compensation.

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**Seattle:** I want to thank Paul for being so brave and persistent in pursuing justice. He's lucky to have a brother so talented to document this issue. I was molested by my brother. It took 10 years of active counseling to find a therapist who could help me "face" my feelings. Others just said to "move on, forget the past." I wrote a letter to my brother as part of my journey. I did not expect him to reply. He actually said "I'm sorry" which meant a lot to me. He had lame excuses, but his sorry was genuine. These acts do affect who

you are even though, intellectually, you understand that you're not to blame. It eventually ruined my marriage because I felt I deserved to be able to say no to sex sometimes, and my husband did not/would not understand "what's the big deal." Thanks again. I hope Paul has found some peace and has also been able to make peace with his former wife.

**Paul Cultrera:** Thank you. You are right. I am extremely lucky to have Joe as my brother. As I have said many times, everyone of us has a story to tell, but not everyone has a way to tell it. I was fortunate enough to have Joe to tell what was my story, but then became our family's story and what I now know is the story of so many people who have suffered this particular type of abuse and in an even larger sense all those who have felt alone and afraid to speak about something or someone that has hurt them.

One effect of sexual abuse that I can attest to is the difficulty in saying no to another person, whether no to sex, or no to any other thing that you really don't want. I encourage you to keep learning when to say no and when to say yes, in accord with what is best for you.

My former wife, Hartley, and I are great friends. Her simple courage in asking me if I had been abused opened up the path to a march toward personal freedom and peace for me, and for that she has my deepest thanks and love. In my life, I have found much peace, as well as much of its opposite. In that I'm like most everyone.

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**Concord, N.H.:** Paul, when exactly was your last meeting with McCormack? And can you describe in a bit more detail what that meeting was like, whether McCormack seemed to have evolved in his understanding of the abuse scandal, etc.?

**Paul Cultrera:** The last time I saw McCormack was in 2003 when he appeared at a meeting in Salem, MA, organized by the Survivors of Joe Birmingham (shown in the film). Based on his lack of response to the questions posed to him there and his complete lack of emotion, I can't give him high marks for an evolving understanding of the abuse scandal.

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**Wichita, Kan.:** I watched the show last night on PBS and it was great!!! I cannot believe this man was able to stay in the priesthood and molest and destroy so many lives. Thanks for having the courage to tell your story and let the rest of us know what really happened. My question is how has this effected your faith? Do you



believe there is God? I am a Protestant and we have had our share of scandals and problems (nothing as bad as this mind you). But this has not tainted my belief or faith. What do you think the future of the Catholic Church will be? Do you think they will clean house or go on as business as usual? Thanks again for telling your story.

**Joe Cultrera:** I saw God this morning on the subway. I see him everyday at work. I talked to him when I talk to friends and strangers. My church is in the street and in every breath I take. I try to do the best I can -- do well by people. I am a miserable sinner, but I try.

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**Joe Cultrera:** Our film is less statistical than others. We just wanted to give you a view from the inside of how it affects one family and changes their views on things.

Thanks so much for being part of this forum and engaging in discussion about this issue. I hope you appreciate our efforts and intents.

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