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Chairman Lawlor, Chairman McDonald, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is John Timothy McGuire. I am fifty one years old and have spent most of my life trying to forget what happened in my local church when I was eight years old. I thought I was pretty successful in doing so until an article was printed in The New London Day newspaper about a woman who was molested on a weekly basis for eight years or more by Father Curry, the local Catholic priest. My Catholic priest.

Thus began the flood of memories.

Being from a family whose parents were divorced when I was five, I was constantly searching for a male role model. My friends fathers, the man who ran the local grocery store... wherever I could, I would. Whoever I could, I would.

Then it dawned on me that if I could become an altar boy, I would have a father in Father Curry. I spent years waiting to be old enough to be eligible. I watched in awe as my friends older brothers snuffed the candles, lit the candles, passed the collection plates, and so on. That was going to be me soon.

I couldn't wait, but I had to. I would constantly ask Father Curry, my older brother, my friends' older brothers, if I was old enough yet. I must have drove them crazy with my constant "checking" on when it might be. I went to church every Sunday.

The day finally arrived. I asked Father Curry if I was "ready" and he told me to meet him in the room he had to the right of the altar. "The room". I can't remember when I met him, but I do remember that he scheduled our meeting when no one else was there. Just me and him and God. I remember everything about that day. Walking in the front doors, pausing, scared. So scared. I was taught to fear God. He watched "everything" you did. From the front door, down the aisle, up on the level with the altar... I had never been that close to God. I was shaking. I knocked on the door and he told me to come in.

He asked me a few questions which I answered. He then had me look at the altar boy outfits. I was already wearing one in my mind. Next he asks me to take my clothes off. I'm eight! What do I know about what's worn underneath. It doesn't seem so strange a request, so I take my shirt off. I ask him how much clothes have to come off and he says all of them. I ask if I have to take my underwear off too and he says yes. At this point I am standing shirtless in front of him. Oh that nasty little triangle of fear: God, Father Curry, me. God is telling Father Curry. Father Curry is telling me. I don't want to take all my clothes off. Then my fear of God which completes the triangle. I didn't want to let God down. I then asked Father Curry why, why do I have to be naked? He told me god needs to see you. At this point it is my belief that God is talking through, and seeing through, Father Curry. I thought I was scared when I walked in. I was mortified now! Get naked or piss off God. Those were my choices. I remember telling Father Curry that I couldn't. I was crying now. He offered to help and reached for my pants. I freaked. I told him again that I couldn't and he said those words that have haunted me for years. Those words that crushed me. He told me "you are not what God is looking for". I grabbed my things and ran out of that church

as fast as I could. I didn't get out the front doors before I realized that I was running from God at this point. Right! "Where you gonna go?" I ran the nearest place where I could be alone. Behind the firehouse in the apple orchard. I sat and cried and apologized to God over and over. It seemed like forever. You've gone and done it now Tim. God is pissed.

I had already been fighting the possibility that I had been the reason my father had left. That's what kids of that age do. To couple that with this was too much for me. I was bad, there was no other way of looking at it. Bad to the core! I'm only eight but I've managed to piss off: my mom, my dad, Father Curry, and God.

It doesn't seem like much happened in that room at the church. He never even touched me.

I was devastated. I still had to be in that church every Sunday. I now had to explain why I did not want to be an altar boy anymore to my mom and my grandmother as well.

I got vague and lied my way through it with them, but that only re-enforced the "you are bad" thing.

I had to watch my brother be an altar boy, my friends as well, but not me. My mind was being tormented on a weekly basis at least, if not daily. I guess when you are a bad person, it doesn't matter that you are eight. When you are bad, you are bad. Period.

Divorced life wasn't good for me at home. I needed my religion in a big way.

This is where the noticeable trouble I seemed to find on a regular basis was cause for concern. My grades dropped. I found the wrong people to hang out with. People who shared unhappiness so to speak. Troublemakers. I was now having to see Mr. Mulcey, the school shrink once a week from the fourth grade to the end of the sixth grade. Skipping church, substance abuse... Fifth grade with substance abuse. Great. Pot! It makes it all go away temporarily! It kept my mind from racing and spiraling around the bad seed thing. Don't get me wrong, I was still bad, but it would go away when I smoked pot. I sought it every chance I could and believe me, even in a quaint little town on the sea like Noank, it's there if you want it. You need to hang with the "right" people. Thus the start of my addiction to pot. The rest of the way through grade school, through junior high, senior high, and on into adulthood. Everything happens after you get weed. Weed is first on the list. Alcohol made me sick, T.H.C., pills, mescaline, all available to try, and I did, but weed did it. Readily available and cheap. You could be a paper boy and afford it. And I did.

Through the years it was cocaine for a while, but it always came back to that good old affordable weed. Cheap and effective and reliable.

This has been an exhausting existence for me. My whole life has had to work around the constant dulling of my senses. I've missed everything. Oh what I could have done with and for my daughters. It breaks my heart to think about it. My mind was either too full or too dulled. One or the other.

Even at fifty one years of age, I don't have the ability to say these things to you all in person without crying and taking five times longer to explain than having it read. Just writing these things dredges up feelings I've tried so hard to make go away. The sharpest double edged sword I know of. Any way you touch it you get cut.

After reading the aforementioned article about Father Curry's abusing that girl at the other church he ran, and how the Norwich Diocese was going to fight her charges, I felt it important to contact her lawyer and explain what I had experienced with Father Curry. The lawyer wasn't even aware of the "other" church in Noank. Let alone his doings there. He seemed very thankful for my information and asked me if I was in need of being represented with my case. I told him if the Norwich Diocese is going to give me a settlement for this, I'll take it.

Then he asked me how old I was. I had just turned forty eight. Apparently we were speaking one week later than the statute of limitations would allow and that the girl was having an issue with that too.

I vowed then to do everything I could to help that girl's case.

When I came across the more recent article about whether to eliminate the thirty year from maturity statute of limitations on civil lawsuits filed in child sexual abuse cases, I saw my opportunity to help lay this issue to rest.

It is my belief that the Catholic Church is well aware of an individual's human nature and their need to suppress these feelings and instances. When you have pissed off God, who's left to talk to about it? No one, and the church knows that. The church plays on that fear, but only to a point. The thirty year from maturity statute point. Then, no culpability. How nice for the church but ask the victims whether it's nice for them.

The Diocese has carved their stance in stone on this issue over the years. Time after time; fighting every case; knowing these things happened and systematically covering them up as they came to light. Relocating priests? Sending them on sabbatical with children? That's going to keep them from doing it again? The Diocese should be ashamed for the way they have treated THESE parishioners. The Diocese's actions in these cases have been deplorable at best! I wonder what God would say!

Which brings me to my points.

1) The Diocese should have no say in the matter whatsoever. The separation of church and state exists for this and other reasons but, the people of Connecticut should decide whether the argument of being too big to fail at the expense of Catholic Charities is a reason, viable or not, to be taken into consideration at all. Too big to fail is not an argument you going to win right now. Maybe they can sell some of their tax free property.

2) I am trying to get people to realize, if they don't already, that my experience took ten minutes. He never even touched me, but the effects were ever-lasting.

Imagine being the person being abused hundreds of times, being told all along you are the sinner; being told to repent and God will forgive you; losing your common sense; losing your innocence; losing your normal life.

Now imagine, after years of trying to make it go away, you are told you are too old to have a legal case against the Diocese.

I can imagine me NOT having a case on the grounds of "well Mr. McGuire, he never did touch you". But I can not imagine being abused hundreds of times, and being told you are too old to have a case. That, to me, is absurd.

In closing, listen to your heart on this one. Not the Catholic Church.

These people (victims) did their forty year sentences. In some cases, more. It's time for the church to do their part in the remaining forty years of these victims' lives.

Believe me, I have better things to do with my time than to sit and fabricate these happenings. There is so much more that is pertinent which can't be said without turning this into a novel, but try to remember; "silence is golden" and that is what the Catholic Church is banking on with this issue.

Eliminate the statute!

Sincerely,

John Timothy McGuire