

First and foremost, thank you Your Honor for your commitment to the pursuit of justice and the protection of the innocent. I also want to personally thank you from the depths of my soul for the opportunity you have given me today to reclaim my voice and renounce the cancerous silence that left me powerless for years. I have survived. I am happy to be alive, and I finally love the sound of my own voice.

Eight and a half years ago, at the age of 23, I was studying Catholic Spirituality at a pontifical university in Rome when I became exposed to a wolf in sheep's clothing... in this case, a Roman Catholic Collar. He figured out quickly that I was fairly naive and filled to the brim with religious zeal. I went to daily Mass and spent hours on end inside glorious Roman churches, wide-eyed in wonder, praying for the will of God to be done in my life. I deeply valued my own virginity and was committed to the pursuit of virtue, with a particular emphasis on that of chastity. I even expressed some openness to religious life and thought the vocation to become a nun was an incredibly beautiful thing. I wanted to become a saint and trusted this wolf when he told me he was the one to lead me to the heights of sanctity. Some way, some how, Father Jacob Bertrand wielded my most beautiful attributes like a gruesome weapon against me. He is a calculated manipulator and the most dangerous type of abuser. He presents a rather godly persona as a masterfully deliberate means of control. He successfully groomed, raped, psychologically tortured, intimidated and silenced me using my love for Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church as a weapon against me every single step of the way. Amidst his brilliant yet classic method of grooming, he gained not only my trust but the total trust and admiration of my entire family who travelled to Rome for Christmas in 2010. Over the course of a ten month grooming process, he didn't just gain trust. Taking advantage of the power differential that existed between us and the fact that I naively placed priests on pedestals, seeing them through rose-colored glasses, he successfully gained an unfathomable amount of control over my psyche.

In plain terms, Father Jacob Bertrand sexually injured me in humiliating and degrading ways during the central liturgical ritual of the Catholic Church, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It was entirely ritualistic and cult-like. His was a brand of violence more harmful than gang rape. He was sexually gratified while I myself, along with all that is truly good and sacred, experienced absolute violation and the zenith of degradation. For the record, there were a total of two sexual contacts and both of them took place in this heinous manner, within the very context of Catholic liturgy. I mention these facts because media outlets misinterpreted the criminal complaint, especially regarding the first instance of criminal sexual misconduct which took place out of state. There was nothing consensual about it. I was in what I can only describe as a brainwashed state - again, his grooming and manipulation was frighteningly brilliant. Father Jacob Bertrand knew full well that I would never have consented to having sex with him, so he used his power as a Roman Catholic priest in order to demonstrate his domination over me and exploit me sexually for his own selfish gratification. I cooperated in what he convinced me was the "second holiest sacrifice next to Jesus and Mary on Calvary."

The word "rape" in and of itself doesn't quite capture the magnitude of Father Jacob Bertrand's offense, for that which took place was diabolical in nature. While it is gruesome having been sexually exploited in such great proportion, the psychological and spiritual aftermath is beyond my ability to describe. Mere words will always fail; there is no way to encapsulate with succinctness the experience of betrayal when you've been brainwashed and raped during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is not possible for me to illustrate with words what it's like to feel "raped by God." It is not possible for me to illustrate with words the nothingness you experience when the Church for which you would die covers it up. It is not possible for me to illustrate with words any of the anguish, for that matter, that has

resulted from this trauma. Many of those who have an inkling of what clergy sexual abuse is like have already taken their lives. Who knows, if it wasn't for the miraculous intervention that took place in my life, I could be in a convent hanging from the choir loft instead of giving this Victim's Impact Statement today.

Again, the aftermath is beyond my ability to describe. There are thousands of ways in which this evil has impacted my life, some of which, I feel, are too heartbreaking and disturbing to share publicly. Processing this trauma was a slow, agonizing taste of hell on earth. Throughout the first two years following the abuse, while I was still brainwashed and in absolute denial of what had taken place, I continued to pray my rosary, attend Mass every day and practice my Catholic faith with unprecedented zeal. I even spent significant time discerning with religious communities. When my now-husband pursued me, I rejected him time and time again in order to fulfill my supposed higher calling. This would later lead to a horrendous vocational crisis. Anyway, in the years of absolute confusion and denial, I remained obedient to Father Jacob Bertrand and didn't tell a soul what he said must remain secret. Although I was unaware that he was doing so, he swore me to secrecy time and time again using what he used best - the sacred - things like God, the Bible, eternal destination, tithing money, etc. I will never forget his sentence, "the devil tempts me to believe you will tell somebody and ruin my ministry." The words are seared in my mind. I swore to him that I would not tell, after all, I didn't want to "cooperate with the devil."

In May of 2012, a miraculous intervention occurred after returning home from my time discerning with Mother Teresa's sisters. Upon breaking silence and explicitly explaining out loud for the very first time what went on during those Masses, it felt as if scales fell in heaps from my eyes. At that moment of disclosure, I began to escape the psychological torture chamber into which Father Jacob Bertrand had put me for years. I immediately cut him entirely out of my life and began the gruesome process of recovery. Although I was no longer in denial, I was completely numb for the following two and a half years. When the numbness began to fade, the process of recovery became absolutely devastating. Overall, it took me more than four years to begin the hard work of reprocessing this trauma in therapy and when I did, all hell broke loose. A severe case of Rape Trauma Syndrome set in. I experienced severe panic attacks, hyperventilation that resulted in emergency room care, anxiety and depression so debilitating that my husband was forced to quit work for fear that I could not be left alone. Daily Mass, which I loved more than anything, was no longer able to be a part of my life, but I did everything in my power to go to church on Sunday. However, Sunday after Sunday, I would suffer so tremendously and end up running out of the church in absolute hysteria. My therapist encouraged me to discontinue going to church altogether, for it was a weekly reliving of torture and trauma. I loved the practice of my faith wholeheartedly, but I was so scarred by the abuse that all things sacred would trigger an overwhelming experience of violent invasion. I naturally developed a phobia of Catholic priests and resolved to practice my faith by attending the Latin Mass because of the safety I experienced when the priest faced east versus facing the people. I did not want a single priest to see me. There is no greater robbery in all the world than stealing the sense of safety one finds in God, the Church and the priesthood. True priests ought to exemplify the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who was the servant of all. Father Jacob Bertrand did not serve me. He dominated with violence and power the whole of my being, leaving me powerless and destroyed. He raped not only my body but also my soul.

I would like to take a brief moment now to address a number of those whose failures led to the coverup of my sexual exploitation because it is a part of the consequences I carry with me... On May 12, 2012, I described these felony sex crimes in graphic detail within the context of confession. I have

some feedback for that confessor. Auxiliary Bishop Andrew Cozzens, why didn't you urge me to go to law enforcement, pursue the therapy necessary to begin processing what had happened or at least speak with me outside internal forum? While you were in support of my going to law enforcement in 2016, your initial mishandling of this information was silencing, leaving young women and girls in the diocese of San Diego exposed to this sex predator for years. In the fall of 2014, I finally formally reported these crimes to Catholic Church officials in the diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina. The report was forwarded to Monsignor Stephen Callahan, the temporary administrator who was elected to maintain the status quo in the San Diego diocese after the death of Bishop Cirilo Flores. Even after Father Jacob Bertrand admitted his behavior in the presence of Monsignor Callahan, the abuse was covered up and the People of God in the diocese of San Diego were lied to. Instead of informing the People of God about Father Jacob Bertrand's sexual predation, a bulletin article was released explaining that he would be taking some time off. In it, he made no mention of the allegations and explained that his absence was due to the PTSD he personally suffered related to an arson attack on the church. Instead of taking responsibility, he played victim. Monsignor Callahan not only enabled this abominable behavior but also transferred him to a new parish a few short months later, where he was exposed to a whole new array of young women and girls. This communicated to me that they were not worthy of protection and that I was worth nothing, just a little lamb in the flock that could be raped and then thrown out. Didn't Christ leave the ninety nine for the one? When will the hierarchical Catholic Church once and for all renounce the evil that is the coverup of clergy sexual abuse? Please, your honor, send a message today that clergy sexual abuse and its coverup are intolerable and victims of this evil are worth every protection the law can offer.

Today, I stand fully empowered. By the grace of God, I am a joyful wife and mother. Believe it or not, I am a practicing Catholic and have embraced a life of full time ministry to the powerless and vulnerable. If I were no longer a person of faith, Father Jacob Bertrand would have successfully robbed me of that which I consider my purest treasure and therefore absolutely everything. He has not. I have experienced full restoration and have found the freedom that is unleashed through the power of forgiving my enemies. Today I am grateful to close this chapter of my life and walk out of this courtroom free. I am at peace moving forward, knowing that I have done what is right by shining a bright light on this horrible darkness. My prayer is that Father Jacob genuinely repents and takes responsibility for his actions. After he pleaded guilty, he sent out a mass email to his "Good Friends/Family of Great Faith." In it he chose not to take responsibility or exhibit genuine humility, but rather continued to manipulate people of good will using Scripture and the sacred. This leads me to pity Father Jacob Bertrand and genuinely pray for his rehabilitation.