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Ann Free Spirit

Synopsis



The Good Shepherd and then the Nazareth House nuns took the place of my family. They told me my mother was dead. In the two orphanages life needed to meet the nun's requirements. In part this meant that, because they told me my mother was sinful, if I was not beaten to change, I would be sinful too, So they said when they beat me. As a child, I was different from some of the other children who the nuns loved, praised and pampered. I understood myself as stupid - someone who could not expect teachings in a classroom. This was a privilege for girls who were worthy of it.

I knew of other girls like me also had to work and were hit like I was, but I was hit if I formed a friendship so I understood that I could not share my feelings - that was wicked to do so I had only my own world to live in like a cocoon. I knew of others outside it, but could not reach them as they could not reach me. At least, not in any comforting sense.

I never knew the nuns thrashed and punished other girls like they thrashed me. I never knew why and you never talked about it. Other girls got hit in line for church or to school the way I did - pulled out of line and slapped and hit for nothing.

It was like a bomb hit me when a women came up to me at St. Josephs reunion in 1997 and told me of the times when I was punished. I had not thought about it - probably since it happened - because after every punishment you spent all your time trying your hardest to be good for the nuns. Trying so hard to polish the floor or whatever; not to talk; not to wet my bed - not to earn the punishment. But however hard you tried, the nuns found reason why I needed to be punished and they hit and boy they hurt.

I find it hard to think about it because to remember it, is to relive the fear and confusion - the unhappiness of being a child was only to hope that I earned the nun's favor, I would become one of the children who the nuns' found me to be - who needed to be beaten for her mother's sins and because, although there was little hope for it, That might help me to be worthy of love - eventually God's love.

The nuns said that punishment, especially if I inflict pain upon myself, brings you closer to God. So when they punished me I used to think about Jesus on the cross. They used to read stories of the martyrs - they especially worshiped St. Peter Chanel, Who was stabbed to death in the Pacific Islands. We were told to be like him.

I have lived my whole life without much of God's love. The nuns taught me that I was not worthy of it. God's love was for other better children. God did not want me or for me to have love, The nuns did not want me, or for me to have love or happy thoughts, or family.

God took my beautiful son from me in a car crash in 1993 to punish me for making contact with my family - the nuns/God had decided I was not entitled to a family.

And if you ask me what, as a child, I thought that was for - as a child I talked when I shouldn't have, but I did not know what I was punished for, except for my own good; and that I might change and become one of those who God loves and who are able to go to Heaven.

The beatings were not my fault. I was not a bad girl, could not have been a child who deserved the punishment - as a child I did not deserve those things. I believed the nuns were good; they were doing God's work. I am still not sure, although I am angry about the beatings. I will explain how I still think I deserved it; because God punished me in 1993 by taking my son. I do not know what I did wrong expect that I must still be the bad person the nuns had to thrash.

I always knew it was a childhood filled with pain and confusion. I now realise the nuns who were good; were doing God's work, were also cruel, vicious women, monsters.

I never thought that the things that I was afraid of were caused by my childhood experiences.

What sticks in my mind about the nuns is how they always told us we were no good, all I heard every day was. "You'll never be any good, your mother never wanted you, you'll end up in the gutter like her, no one will ever want you."

It is hard to forget this - it is there all the time.

What the individual members of the two orders did and what the senior members of the orders allowed, was a reign of terror and fear for the helpless children.

By that I mean that the children who had help - from a solo parent who couldn't care for them but who the nuns respected - were not terrorised. The orphanage older girls who stick up for the Orders and its works are either ones who, although mistreated, have remained in a relationship with the Church and the Orders, which suits them; or the ones who were well treated as children because the nuns either liked them, or recognised that there was someone else, watching out for them.

The ones, like I was, who were totally at the mercy of the nuns, it now seems we were treated without mercy.

There were some of us who were unlucky enough to be singled out as "the chosen ones' of the priest, nuns, lay workers and the older girls of

the two orders, who picked us out to sexually abuse us. The sexual abuse has scarred me for life and no amount of counseling can cure me of the pain I feel, within.

The injuries on me, were severe physical beatings, child slave labor, semi-starvation; cold and poor clothing; overwork; lack of education; emotional abuse; physical abuse; spiritual abuse; sexual abuse; sadistic torture; pain; suffering from carers and those trusted with our care, who we trusted - through no choice of our own, these sadistic people who hid behind the image of being saintly people in the service of God.

Corporal punishment was common in both girls and boys Catholic Orphanages, the nuns used their power over the children for the rest of their lives. The children from Catholic orphanage's were society's undesirable children, to be kept out of sight and in place, with no rights like other children. Most of us were parent less, illegitimate and because their parents could not afford to keep them at home, so the parents took them to the place which they thought their children would be well looked after; being a house of God.

Because I was illegitimate I was deemed only for domestic service and laboring jobs. As it was I did 'mans work in a little girls body" expected to work from 5:30 am to late at night, seven days a week. From when I was five I had to work on their farm, it was hard heavy work, especially for such little ones and what was worse, was the fear of not knowing when you'd get a crack across your head, ears, face, legs and back, from the nun walking behind you.

Some girls had beautiful wavy hair, like I did, the nuns hated us and told us we were vain, I didn't know what vain meant. They would try to straighten our hair by wetting it and then pulling on our hair, telling us that we were ugly. I believed them and hated myself so much that all my life I would not look in a mirror and I don't have one in our bathroom. I know now I was not ugly as a child but I wish I had known way back then because it might have given me a bit of self-esteem.

I never forgot the brutality of how the nuns abused me, I can put it to the back of my head, but it comes back at me, especially the nightmares and head pain. Boy! are they bad, that I want to bang my head against the wall. They won't go away. I've heard people say; "That was just the way things were in those days;" and I get so angry.

The nuns had very bad tempers and they never controlled them. I don't know how they can live with their conscience, with what they did to me and all of the abused unwanted, little, innocent children around the world.

What still makes me upset more than anything else, is that they still get away with it, all I wanted was someone to be kind to me. I was not the only one that got whipped, I did nothing at all and what gets to me is why were they beating us every day and all the time.

The beatings consisted of numerous punches with her clenched fist to my face, she broke my nose five times and bust my ear drums. I never did see a Doctor about my nose and my ears, the nuns seemed not to care about how I felt, when I was in pain because it was them who caused it.

I would fall to pieces when ever I saw a nun, as they picked on the girls who did not have parents and those who were illegitimate, we got the worst of the beatings. then I would get it again because I wet my bed, I wet my bed until I was ten and then off and on until I was fifteen years old, I was beaten into pulp for wetting my bed each day and with cold baths.

It was the beatings and the fear of the nuns, that is why I wet my bed. I was treated like I was unwanted, something to be hidden away and to be ashamed of. I was so scared.

The nuns would say I was telling lies, but I never did, I couldn't say that. If the nuns said you were a liar, then you were a lair. The nuns use to make me open my mouth and put a cake of soap on my tongue, they would then close my mouth shut and I had to keep it shut with both layers of teeth deep into the soap. My mouth would be foaming and I was sick, I was not allowed to take the soap out until the nuns told me to, they did not care.

It was worse than the concentration camp's for children.

Some of the girls have committed suicide, some are in mental hospital, some are homeless living on the streets. some are alcoholics and some are in and out of prisons. The most difficult thing in life is when you are put down so much as a child, you don't have any confidence, it really does hold you back. I was terribly nervous, I felt that I was a nuisance to everyone around me. I still doubt myself, I don't have any confidence. It is the fear, the same kind of fear I had as a child growing up in the two orphanages.

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