

**The Church at Her Very Best**  
***The Catholic Priest Who Opened the Door***  
***to My Recovery and Healing***  
**By Charles Brian**

The Catholic Church is going through a very painful process as the light of truth exposes some very dark and damaging acts of abuse, neglect and sexual immorality by some clergy and bishops. I experienced abuse and neglect as a child in a highly dysfunctional family, so my heart breaks for all who have suffered at the hands of men consecrated to be servants of Christ Jesus. This is truly an abomination that strikes at the heart of the Church's mission.

Yet, while acknowledging this darkness, I must also witness to the fact that my story reflects the power of a holy priest who led me from despair, into the light of recovery and reconciliation with God.

I was involved in two abortions as a young man. I tried desperately to prevent the second abortion. I failed and was traumatized after the procedure.

After years of suffering, out of desperation I began going to a local Catholic church. I was fearful of church and facing God. But having lost two children to abortions, I felt there was nowhere else to go.

Father Mike was a priest at our parish. One of his homilies had to do with Divine Mercy. He shared that God loves the sinner, but not the sin.

After sitting with my arms crossed in the last row of the church every Sunday for about a year, it finally started to sink in that maybe God did not actually hate me.

I decided to visit Father Mike for confession and reconciliation. The appointment lasted for two hours. I confessed all my sins including the abortions. I cried like crazy the entire time, fearful I'd be asked to leave the church because of my grave sins.

Much to my surprise just the opposite happened. Father Mike was so loving and gentle. He made me feel safe at the most difficult time in my life. There was no judgment or shame toward me. He was empathetic to my suffering, and I was shocked — that he was not shocked hearing my story.

Father Mike also explained that our church was full of sinners, not saints. I did my penance, and out of my old habit of stinking thinking, I waited for something bad to happen.

As time went on, just the opposite occurred. I ended up teaching Sunday school, and I became a Eucharistic Minister. I served at masses and did rounds at our local hospital. For the first time in my life, I began to trust God and the church.

## Opening the Door to Deeper Healing

Yet over the next few years the emotional pain of the abortions would not go away. A counselor diagnosed me with depression. My general practice doctor prescribed medication but with no real results. No one knew how to help me with post-abortion grief.

It wasn't until Father Mike encouraged me to attend a [Rachel's Vineyard Retreat](#) that I started truly healing. At the program, I met the most amazing people, including two loving priests serving on the team. I was able to share my story and fully participated in the program. I named my children, and in the memorial service at the close of the weekend, I read a love letter I wrote to them. I also named them; Marie and Jacob.

For the first time in my life, I was able to deal with the hurt, sorrow and pain in a loving way toward myself, my children and their mothers. It was very helpful being around other people who understood my pain, and validated my suffering. I also experienced God's loving mercy and grace.

I left the Rachel's Vineyard program feeling free of pain for the first time in my life. I attended several reunions with the team and other participants.

God is now the driving force in my life. My goal in life today is to spread the word about Divine Mercy. I had a very warped view for many years about God and that caused me great pain and anguish. There is [amazing healing](#) to experience if you open up and trust God.

I have been blessed to experience the Church at her very best.

[You can read the [full and powerful testimony](#) of Charles's experience in a highly dysfunctional family and his abortion and healing journey [here](#).]

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**"The more we let God take over,  
the more truly ourselves we become."  
~ C.S. Lewis**