

MONTH 12: DECEMBER

Reflections on Healing: Honoring Your Journey

[Content Warning: This article discusses clergy sexual abuse. Please take care of yourself. You can stop anytime.]

You made it through another year. Maybe this was the year you named what happened as abuse for the first time. Maybe you told someone. Maybe you reported. Maybe you started therapy. Maybe you simply survived. Whatever this year held, you're still here. And that matters.

LOOKING BACK

A year ago, you might have been: • Believing the "consensual affair" lie • Blaming yourself • Isolated and silent • Convinced you had no options But this year, you've learned: • It wasn't your fault • Consent requires equal power • Grooming is calculated manipulation • You have legal rights • DARVO is recognizable • Healing doesn't require forgiveness Knowledge is power. You're more powerful than you were.

WHAT YOU'VE SURVIVED

Healing from clergy abuse requires: • Facing truth about someone you trusted • Accepting that an institution failed you • Grieving loss of spiritual community • Navigating family who don't believe • Reporting (if you chose to) • Sitting with uncertainty about faith • Building new life without the church This is massive emotional labor. And you've done it.

THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT HEALING

Healing isn't linear. Some days: strong, clear, ready to fight. Other days: broken, confused, questioning everything. Both are normal. Trauma healing is waves, not a straight line.

WHAT COMES NEXT

As this year ends, ask yourself: ****What do I need in the coming year?*** Maybe: Finding a therapist, deciding whether to report, setting boundaries, rebuilding spirituality, connecting

with survivors, pursuing legal action, or just... resting. **What can I release?** Maybe: Shame, responsibility for his actions, need for family to understand, pressure to forgive, expectations about healing timeline. **What do I want to reclaim?** Maybe: Sense of safety, trust in judgment, spiritual identity, body autonomy, voice.

TOOLS YOU NOW HAVE

After this year, you have: ✓ Language to describe what happened ✓ Understanding of power dynamics ✓ Knowledge of your legal rights ✓ Resources for support ✓ Strategies for boundaries ✓ Permission to heal on your timeline

A REMINDER FOR HARD DAYS

When you doubt yourself: • You're not crazy (you experienced grooming) • You're not weak (you were exploited) • You're not alone (thousands of adults experience this) • You're not powerless (you have options) • You're not broken (you're healing)

MOVING FORWARD

Next year, this newsletter will continue providing resources, survivor stories, and advocacy. You're not alone in this.

THE BOTTOM LINE

You made it through this year. Whether you reported or stayed silent, stayed in faith or walked away, rebuilt relationships or cut contact — you survived. Survival is the foundation of everything else. You are not alone. You are not powerless. You deserve to be whole. And you're further along than you think.

RESOURCES: RAINN: 1-800-656-4673 | You deserve support. Take care. 