

[REDACTED]

November 27, 1992

[REDACTED]  
Franciscan Province of St. Barbara  
1500 34th Avenue  
Oakland, CA 94601-3091

Dear [REDACTED]

I have before me a copy of the letter my son, [REDACTED] wrote to you. I also have a copy of the recent reply. I have read them both over several times.

Your kind words to him are very much appreciated. [REDACTED] needs to hear that "your heart goes out to him". What he needs more is for you to listen with your heart! He needs to be assured that this situation will be dealt with exactly as you said, "in a forthright and truthful manner"; to know that you will keep your promise!

[REDACTED] letter covered the brief span of two years. What of the years that followed? With the exception of the time when he was in therapy and when he visited [REDACTED] who was then the Provincial, in Oakland, California, and Father Mario at St. Mary of the Assumption in Stockton, California, he does not mention them. He should have; they gradually became a living hell for him and a nightmare for those who love him! It is not sufficient for you to just know of Father Mario's perverted behavior; you must also be made aware that the insidious seeds of self-doubt, shame, guilt, indignation, and anger continued to grow long after graduation day!

That day we did not bring home the same person we had delivered so trustingly to the "good friars" in 1966. He no longer spoke to becoming a priest. He dismantled the altar he had had in his room since grade school. Most importantly, he had forgotten how to laugh. There was no humor in anything; life had become oh, so very serious. What happened to our son? I know now that he was lost in the hallowed halls of Saint Anthony's Seminary at the hands of the "good friars". I do include the other friars in residence at that time. Surely they could not have lived in so close a community without being aware of Father Mario's treatment of the students. What kind of treatment was it?

Bizarre? UnChristian? Definitely not in keeping with the teaching of the Church or have I missed something along the way? I firmly believe they turned their heads and looked the other way. That appalls me! The dedicated Church, the dedicated priests, dedicated to what? Certainly not dedicated to to a loving God as I have been taught.

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Permit me to quote a most significant sentence from [REDACTED] letter. "All of the people who kept silence when they knew about this man's acts only helped to perpetuate a serious evil upon innocent people". This applies to all people who, either as individuals or as an organization, look the other way or conveniently "sweep it under the rug." [REDACTED] who would have been the conscience of the world, assumed a heavy burden of guilt over the silence he kept. For all these years, he has not and does not exclude himself.

When [REDACTED] graduated from college and entered the work force, his problems began to gradually surface. Surprisingly, he did not seek employment in accordance with his education. I realize now that he lacked self esteem. Instead, he took work in lumber yards, hardware stores, etc. There were many jobs because [REDACTED] could not hold a job! The slightest correction or hint of criticism and [REDACTED] was consumed with an anger that, in one instance or another, fed itself; it knew no bounds and had no compassion. His friends faded away and those who did not soon learned to be very, very careful of what they said around [REDACTED] lest they be misunderstood.

Thanks to a wise and loving wife who saw a pattern in [REDACTED] behavior, [REDACTED] was convinced that he should seek counseling. Less than two months into therapy, [REDACTED] confronted me with this question: "How could you have possibly allowed me to go to the seminary?" He was angry. I was confused. This was the first I knew that he was miserable at the seminary. He didn't tell us why; just that it was a hell for him and that we, as responsible parents, should have known that at fourteen, he would be confronted by situations that he was not prepared to face.

"Displaced anger" was not a term that we had heard of back then. If I had heard it later, I didn't relate it to our situation. But make no mistake; I know the pain of experiencing it!

Unfortunately, sadly, and regrettably, at about the time [REDACTED] anger towards us surfaced, [REDACTED] father, [REDACTED] was diagnosed as having terminal cancer. [REDACTED] anger grew as did the cancer. It surpassed his love for us. The remaining thirteen months of [REDACTED] life were without his love and support. We reasoned that [REDACTED] anger and depressions were the result of some sort of struggle with his religious principles. His depressions were frightening us; we feared for the possibility of his taking his own life!

This fear stayed with me for many months following [REDACTED] death. I mourned the death of my husband which at least I could understand. We had been loving parents. Nothing in his childhood could justify such anger and rejection. I lived constantly with the question, why?

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During the year following [REDACTED] death, our relationship hit bottom. We no longer saw each other. We lived a mile apart, but we were separated by an abyss that would have engulfed the Universe!

Into this climate of hostility toward me, their son was born. From day one until he was three, he had to have sensed it.

At three, he made it apparent that he did not like me. His parents and I were on shaky ground feeling our way, hopefully, to if nothing else, surface speaking terms. My grandson wasn't having any part of it. On the occasion of their rare visits, he would refuse to speak to me and when no one else was looking, he would make ugly faces at me. I overheard him tell his cousin, who lives with me, "My Dad doesn't like Grandmother". Four years have passed and it's a little better, but he still avoids me. he doesn't make faces anymore, but it's very clear that I am not someone he enjoys seeing. I wonder if the imprint of those earlier days will ever fade enough to allow us the relationship for which I long?

Tell me, [REDACTED], do you really think you know even partially how I feel? This man robbed my son of the joy of his youth. He robbed my husband and I of the comfort, love, and support from our son when we needed it the most. More than likely, he has driven a wedge between my grandson and I that will never quite go away.

I implore you to put an end to the list of Father Mario's victims, now, and for all time. Do not let him slip through the cracks as the former Provincial did. There is no reprimand or punishment that is too severe. What is more despicable than one who hides behind the "cloth" to do the devil's work? What organization, claiming to do the work of Jesus Christ, shuns and rejects those whom it has hurt, again and again? My son, years after being told that he did not meet the requirements to become a Secular Franciscan, finally threw his cord of Saint Francis into the garbage can. Even the lepers were fit company for the beggarman of Assisi.

Sincerely yours,

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