

Pope Cries, I Paint

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It is difficult not to pay attention to the stream of news regarding clergy abuse in the Catholic Church. It is on all the major news sites I frequent, plus the [Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests](#) issues daily e-mail press releases.

I really do not want this blog to become about clergy abuse. That is not at all my intention. My focus here is squarely on understanding trauma and dissociation particularly as they relate to my own healing.

But I do have to comment when I read something that begs for comment. I feel like it is sort of my public duty. So let me hop onto my blog soapbox for a moment.

The latest news is that Pope Benedict met with clergy abuse victims during a trip to Malta and 'wept.' The news story included a press statement from the Vatican, which was telling:

"He prayed with them and assured them that the Church is doing, and will continue to do, all in its power to investigate allegations, to bring to justice those responsible for abuse, and to implement effective measures designed to safeguard young people in the future."

One does not need to know much about any facet of this ongoing saga to know that everything said in that statement, after "he prayed with them," is demonstrably untrue.

It is also interesting as to who these "victims" are. They were undoubtedly hand picked and expected to say things like "[I am] trying to regain my faith." But those seeking to restore faith through the Catholic Church do not represent the vast majority of those abused. What about those whose faith has been shattered? Whose spirituality has been twisted by conflicting messages, teachings, and actions? How can that spirituality possibly be truly restored within the walls and constructs of an institution with such weight as the Catholic Church?

I struggle. In my head mostly. And I write. And I talk. And I pay attention. And I draw and paint.

The image above was done as an art therapy directive last week right after leaving the hospital. The directive was to "paint about something lost and something gained." What I lost is a spiritual direction. What I gained is a family, and an ability to ground and contain, and heal.

I know that someday these two sides will have to intersect. I cannot imagine that now, but perhaps they already are. I have had experiences of spirituality not tied to any religion. If you look at the early posts on this blog, you will read about my "consciousness" or "enlightenment" experiences. I also know that parts of my internal system have had similar wondrous experiences that were tied to religion. They were protected for those parts. But as I do the hard work of looking at myself as a whole, I cannot help to know they were really taken away.

That reality poses a huge dilemma for me. It is also one of the big questions that those of us with dissociative disorders have to face.

It could be asked in this way: How do I integrate parts of myself that were protected with parts of myself that were not without going crazy?

Or it could be asked in a much simpler way: How do I heal?

Perhaps this journey, partly documented here, is my spiritual path. Perhaps I am meant to heal. Perhaps I am meant to live.