

My husband of 40 years speaks of that “Lonesome Valley” and I truly understand, having walked that valley myself in the 16 months that I carried the burden of “The Secret” alone. I knew my husband desperately needed help, but The Secret constrained me. Instead, I was on my own to offer love, support, and gentle encouragement to him to seek that help.

I was relieved when he did tell someone else, and I was sure the therapy that ensued would ease the burden. To my dismay, an inappropriate therapy combined with medication seemed to make matters worse. Being a devoted Catholic active in my parish and a daily communicant with a regular prayer life, I became all the more devoted. Prayer would provide what therapy lacked.

My husband tried another therapist (eventually there were four with the current one providing the most help). In between therapist 2 and 3, we found our dear Franciscan nun who started us on the right path. By the time we found her, the extent of the abuse of children by clergy and its cover-up were national news.

This is when my own crisis of faith started to unfold. I was not angry at the abuser, assuming that he was mentally ill; but I was shocked and outraged at those who knowingly failed to stop the abuse and prevent future victims. Now I started to question not only their judgment but also their message. Were any of their teachings true; does God truly exist; if so, why didn't He act?

The bishop who had my husband's abuser residing in his diocese restored my hope that there were good and holy members of the hierarchy who wanted to help victims and protect children. We unfortunately had quite the opposite experience with the bishop of the diocese where the abuser remained incardinated.

Bishop Loverde held the first Mass for the victims of abuse at the cathedral and we attended, met Pat Mudd; and the rest is history that my husband has outlined. At the end of our private meeting with Bishop Loverde, my husband said “If you think of any way I can help you, I will be happy to do so.”

Bishop took my husband up on his offer, and there has been a wonderful transformation that resulted. The Secret has now been told in small gatherings and in a very public way in a Catholic News Service article with name and photo attached. My husband now realizes that the shame is not his; and he has found the good that can come of his experience by helping others.

I attend all of the various programs offered by the Diocese with my husband as his support person and have found them to be as helpful to me personally as they are to him. I have gleaned insights into some of my husband's behaviors in certain situations from the stories of other survivors and their spouses. The reflections offered, the tales of spiritual journey, and the loving support of Bishop and all associated with the Office of Victim Assistance have nurtured my faltering faith. My faith in the Church and hope in at least some of the hierarchy has been restored—only time will tell if complete trust will ever follow.