

# Losing Faith in Organized Religion

By Louise LeBrun

Once again, allegations of institutionalized child abuse perpetrated by the clergy of the Catholic Church filled the news. This time, Europe was awakening to what we for all too long have not wanted to see or hear or know as a truth in our own experiences: we are a species that cannibalizes our young.

I've written about this in many other [times](#) and [spaces](#). It is never far from my awareness because of the nature of the work I do. My life is filled with competent, resourceful and successful adults who still carry the scars – and sometimes, festering wounds – from times long-ago that rest just below the surface of their enviable lives.

For more than 25 years, I've been working with adults whose lives have been deeply, deeply scarred by their experiences of being children. Far beyond the notion of being prey to some dark and faceless presence that leaps out of the bushes and steals them away, children's greatest harm is far too often at the hands of those supposedly charged with their greatest of care: parents, babysitters, teachers, pediatricians, school principals, doctors, choir masters, police officers, social workers, family friends, cousins, aunts and uncles, sports coaches, siblings, therapists... and on and on the list goes.

Men and women, wearing the mantle of our sacred trust (see the list above) have become 'untouchable'; sit beyond the reach of our willingness and ability to question their behaviors, their motives and their intentions. Those dressed in the 'titles' of their professions live beyond the boundaries of our reproach; sit, unattainably, beyond the truth of our own experience. Where did we learn that because someone has a title (doctor, priest, parent, etc) or a degree (knowledge and accompanying credentials), their righteous rhetoric trumps the truth of our own experience?

In my time of working with others, I have heard stories that have filled me with a sense of rage and outrage; have left me weeping with my clients; have caused me to wonder at our capacity, as a species, for betrayal and brutality; and have laid out clearly, for me, why our world is in massive, pervasive and intensive decline. We do indeed, reap what we sow.

And we do indeed, cannibalize our young – if not in body then in mind and spirit. Indirectly, we let them know by our discomfort and agitation that we do not want to hear what they want to tell us. Directly, we teach them to be silent and compliant in the face of heinous violation in order to preserve the veneer of our intact lives. We tell them no one

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will care... that speaking will bring the pain of retaliation in body (physical assault and worse) and mind (they will be abandoned, left unloved and disconnected from those they rely on for their very existence).

We strip them of their innocence... their capacity to know intimately and trust unquestioningly the innate genius of who they are... and expect the empty carcass to perform according to external standards we impose. And impose them, we must, for they have lost their ability to determine them, for themselves. For this, there is a price. Innocence lost creates fear and confusion. Innocence taken produces rage! Our culture reflects this in its diseases of mind and body; and in our inability to trust – ourselves and/or each other.

Communities are struggling with allegations of organized efforts by pedophiles to take the innocence of our children... and their lives. Whether these lives are taken physically or emotionally, victims are left to struggle for the rest of their lives with their own dark ghosts and agonizing inner conflict. What might have been a life lived with potential becomes a life lived in the thick and sticky residue of rage mixed with betrayal and self-loathing.

Over these years of working with so many, I have come to one simple conclusion: we don't want to know. We don't want to see and hear what our children are telling us. We don't want to know the truth that awakens in us – having struggled for so long to make it go away! – when the vibration of the truth of our children causes all to begin to move and sway. We don't want to deal with what moves inside of us when we are confronted with the greatest of all challenges – that of having to face that there is no one who will take care of 'it' or 'us'; that it is entirely up to us; and that ours are the voices that must find their sound in an undeniable chorus of "STOP!"

I stopped being a fan of organized religion (of any flavor) by the time I was 17. Perhaps it was the hypocrisy of pontification by the priest, his boozy breath warming the back of my neck as he inched himself as close as he dared without arousing suspicion. Perhaps it was the way the nuns bowed and stepped back, as if being second-class citizens were somehow 'holy' and meaningful and a great role model for the young women in their care. Perhaps it was hearing all the other stories around me... stories like those that now fill the airwaves and newspapers... too many and too frequent to be brushed off with a flip of the hand and dismissed through use of shame and humiliation should you dare to speak. It is so easy to marginalize a truth that does not match the one we want to hear.

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As great as my revulsion is for what is occurring (and has been occurring for generations!) throughout the Catholic Church, their situation is not unique. A greater and far more damaging and terrifying truth lives in the realization that for far too many, our own homes are equally if not more dangerous than what has become institutionalized in our communities.

There is no greater sacred trust than that of parenting. And there is no greater violation than that trust, betrayed. Where does one hide from that? Where do we run?

Over the years of working with the amazing people whose paths have crossed my own, I have been astounded at the number of 'fully functioning' adults who harbor deep and debilitating secrets; who carry the burden of the great shame that does not belong to them; and who have learned to separate their 'being' from their capacity for 'doing', that they might find a way to navigate a life long ago taken by those charged to protect.

When working with others, I sometimes have this image that comes to mind.. the image of a large, gleaming and beautiful pond... sunlight dancing off its surface... surrounded by the greenest of grass and abundant life streaming through birdsong and colorful vegetation. And then, in an instant, it is as if the lid is lifted and what lies beneath the surface is a massive, seething cesspool... dark and filled with the stench of rot and puss and decay. In that, there is nothing that sustains life. And in that moment, any remaining illusion I might want to have about the myth of the intact family cannot hold its ground in the face of simple truth, openly told.

In this moment, I am clear: the greatest of myths of intact families is that of organized religion. The greatest illusion that we seek to continuously perpetuate is that of sanctity and holiness and sacredness... that of having righteousness and the hand of some god as our great permission to cause others to submit to some will, against the truth of their own experience. In my world, organized religion is the last bastion of external referencing and one whose time has come to be brought into the light of day to be scrutinized and examined for what it is: fallible, and often broken, people seeking to be seen to be other than what they are. Mindless and intergenerational compliance will not change our lives or our world. Mindful, unique choice – guided by the internal cues of the truth of our own experience – will!

No one is coming. No one is going to protect us. As sad and as terrifying as that may be, it really is up to us. What we need to remember is that we are no longer 3; that 'mom and

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dad' – or their current representation of authority – are themselves often damaged and imperfect; and that the only permission I require to stand tall in the truth of my own experience, is my own.

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**Louise LeBrun** has been changing lives - including her own - for more than 25 years. In times of uncertainty, agitation and fear, she believes that what is inside us will shape what unfolds outside of us, as evidenced by the choices we make. At this time, Louise is committed to working exclusively with women to redefine and reclaim leadership. Her original and extensive collection of books, CD's and guided experiences have been helping women to trust the truth of their own experience, redefining and reclaiming leadership for a new world. Her retreat intensives catapult participants beyond their history and into an *Emerging Future* of their own design. Join Louise as she hosts **Reclaiming Your Self: Women Unedited and Engaged** (on Contact Talk Radio) and visit her on **Facebook** to become part of a growing community of those seeking to discover the power of contagion of an awakened collective.



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