

I began my studies at the College of Saint Benedict as a freshman in the spring of 1985. During that first year, I met a senior from St. Ben's who was a poli-sci/pre-law student. She knew that I was going to study the same, so she advised me to take Criminal Law from J. Fitzhugh and Constitutional Law I and II from Fr. Dan Ward. She told me that Fitzhugh was a sleazy guy because he would troll St. Bens looking for girlfriends but he was a good professor. She told me that the Constitutional Law courses were good but tough and they were taught by Fr. Dan Ward.

My interaction with Fr. Dan Ward was a rollercoaster; when I first met him it was a complete high, but little did I know how dark things would eventually turn.

It was in the Constitutional Law class that I first met Fr. Dan, who was my instructor for the course. I studied hard and did well in the class. At some time during the semester, Fr. Dan invited me, and a couple of male students to have dinner with him at the Refectory. It was fun, and afterwards he asked us to accompany him to his room in one of the dormitories. We spent most of the night drinking beer and talking about politics, the law, the clergy, etc.

I remember fondly the initial discussions and how proud I was to be a great student in his eyes and in his classes. But now, with hindsight it just all feels like I stepped into a trap and never got out. The closer you got to Fr. Dan emotionally, the more he elicited from you: what you liked, what you were afraid of, what did you want for your future, how he could help you accomplish your goals. He seemed interested but he was really being voyeuristic; wanting all the salacious details, the little intricate threads that wove a person together with all their intimate thoughts and memories. I trusted him. He was a priest and I trusted him. I was wrong to have trusted him; I just didn't know it at the time.

What I remember from those little gatherings in his dorm room was that it was always awkward and a little embarrassing to leave at the end of the night. I always felt like if I left early I was missing out on something. What I soon found out was that those who left first were talked about when they were gone. The first to leave were "losers" and then Fr. Dan got to gossip about them; all the little intimate one-on-one conversations with Fr. Dan was him just mining for "dirt" and he would confide secrets of yours with the others. The flip side was that if you were the last to leave it was really uncomfortable as you didn't know if he was going to shake your hand tonight, or hug you for too long or kiss you weirdly on your forehead.

Fr. Dan was a misogynist to his very core. He did not tell you to your face but he certainly took pleasure in tearing you down for the pleasure of others.

I recall an incident that occurred one night in the dorms. Fr. Dan asked me to go to with him to meet two guys in their room. We got there and he didn't introduce me, at first. He did, however start up a nasty conversation with the guys about how shitty [REDACTED] was and how moronic "[REDACTED]" was. At the time, I was the [REDACTED]. He dragged out this horrible conversation with the guys, each saying nastier and nastier things about "[REDACTED]", and I was mortified with his behavior and the conversation. Finally, he told them who I was and we were all embarrassed and I was mortified.

The more I went to his room the more anxious I got; I wanted to be there and yet I didn't want to be there. I felt like he had intruded into my head and knew way too much about me, which he did, and he used personal information like a weapon.

One night as I prepared to leave after a long night of studying and tutoring from Fr. Dan, I got up to go and was putting on my coat when I was spun around. Fr. Dan grabbed the lapels of my coat and before I knew it he was kissing me forcefully on the mouth, well it was really kissing as much as it felt like a declaration of war, like I had been branded by him, that I was his and no-one else's. It was clear to me that he had an erection and he made no effort to hide this fact as he rubbed it against me. He was as excited as I was horrified. I left without my books and tore off down the hall half-expecting him to run after me. The next class, he brought my books and gave them back to me. It seemed like he was smiling a new grin as he did it.

The thing was, Fr. Dan is a monster. He was like an abusive ex-boyfriend who never took "no" for an answer and the more you pulled away from him the more crazy he became. When I started pulling away from him, and stopped dropping by his room so much, then that's where he started acting more crazy to me. The late night phone calls started, threatening phone calls telling me I had to drop some classes to take others that he taught instead.

One JTerm, [REDACTED] and I took Fr. Dan's Mock Trial class. At the end of the term, [REDACTED] said she didn't want to go to a competition in Iowa, and I didn't want to either, as I had already competed the year before, plus I didn't want to be around Fr. Dan for a long weekend. Anyhow, we both told Fr. Dan our decision. Before I got back from dinner my phone was ringing off the hook. It was Fr. Dan

telling me that I had better go to Iowa with him and the group. If I didn't go with him, he said, he would give [REDACTED] and me an "F" for the class. I never told [REDACTED], I just went to Iowa and we both got passing grades.

It got so bad that at one point, in my junior year, I switched majors to biology, which I was obviously not cut out for and I didn't do well in. So, I ended up switching back to Poli Sci just to try to finish up my degree, which at that point, was in limbo.

In the fall of my Senior year, I had been so depressed and doing so poorly in school that after the JTerm ended I decided I wasn't going to be back for the Spring term. I needed to get away - I was having a nervous breakdown; I cried and holed myself up in my room for days on end. I flunked out; to this day I can't say that without feeling sad. My transcript shows my horrible descent of my grades; all I ever wanted to do in my whole life was to be a lawyer and I will never be able to do it as my GPA is horrible. Fr. Dan took that from me. I'll never get that back. He took my dream and crushed it.

Getting back to spring term, I had gone to my parent's home the first week of February and told them I wasn't going to graduate in the spring. It was a difficult time for me and for my family. They had never seen me fail at something.

On February of 1990, I was in a car accident. I did not return to campus after that as I was not attending classes. When I did return to walk through graduation ceremonies in spring of 1990 I was told that Fr. Dan had been telling people that I was a crazy person and that I had successfully committed suicide.

I did try to come back and finish my degree a few years later. I met with Michelle Sauer, the Academic Advisor at CSB, and was advised what I needed to get my degree.

One of the conditions I had, with myself and with the school, was that there would be NO knowledge of my return to campus being shared with Fr. Dan. In fact, I had been told that Fr. Dan was off campus for the whole semester, as I was told he was recuperating from a stomach ailment so it was to be ideal. It was a lie. Fr. Dan was at SJU. I saw him the third week of the semester in the Refectory eating dinner with his new little retinue of minions, and I was sick to my stomach. I dropped out again after he started in on me like before. Only this time, I went and spoke to everyone about him.

I first went to the Abbot, who took me to a cozy room. He said he would take what I said seriously, and he told me that I should also talk to the President at CSB;

I arranged a meeting and came up from Minneapolis. When I got to CSB I was invited into a meeting room. As I entered I saw Fr. Dan. He was sitting behind the door. They ambushed me. I sat down for what seemed like eternity and was told that Fr. Dan was a man, first, who makes mistakes like any person would, and that to heal the rift Fr. Dan had asked that I hug him and show him that I forgave him.

I left the meeting room and ran down the hallway to the ladies room and threw up. I remember walking back to my car in the east parking lot and crying so hard that I couldn't see well enough to drive.

Fr. Dan does not deserve forgiveness from me. I will never forget what he did; he took my college experience from me, he took my career dreams from me and for a long time, he took my faith from me. I go to church now and I have carved out a career for myself, but like I said before he does not deserve forgiveness from me.

Hopefully this letter of my experiences will help others.

STATE OF MINNESOTA: Hennepin COUNTY

Personally appeared before me, a Notary Public, in and for said county and state, on this 10 day of November, 2012, the within named [REDACTED], known to me, or satisfactorily proven, to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument and who acknowledges that they executed the same for the purposes therein contained.

Tyler Nelson
NOTARY PUBLIC

Printed: Tyler Nelson

Commission Expires: 1.31.17

