

Former Roman Catholic Bride of Christ Nun Testifies sermonaudio.com of Abnormal Life in the Convent

An Abnormal Life

By Richard Bennett

Bible Text: Galatians 1:6-9, Ephesians 2:8-10

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Announcer. If you would like a free newsletter on this or other subjects, just give us a call at Christian Answers. The phone number is (512) 218-8022 or you could email us at cdebater@aol.com. Thank you.

Larry Wessels. Hello, this is Larry Wessels, Director of Christian Answers of Austin, TX, Christian Debater Ministries. I'm pleased to introduce to my audience a dear brother in the Lord, Richard Bennett, Director of Berean Beacon Ministries, an outreach to Roman Catholics.

Richard Bennett. It is great to be here, Larry.

Larry. For people that don't know you, you were a Roman Catholic priest for 22 years, is that right? Please give us a short account of your life.

Richard. Yes, I was a Catholic priest for 22 years. I was a Catholic altogether for 48 years having grown up in Dublin, Ireland and I was trained very early on in my education in what we call secondary and elementary education by the Jesuits, and then I decided to become a Catholic priest and I spent eight years in preparation. It was a novitiate year and then six years to ordination when I was ordained a priest in Dublin, Ireland in 1963, and then one year in Rome, eight years in all, and I spent 21 years in Trinidad, West Indies as a parish priest carrying out the work of a priest. I had the best academic training you could get finishing up in the city of Rome itself near the Vatican, and I really had a desire to bring Catholics to what we thought was a way of being right with God so that they could get to purgatory and then they finally could get to heaven, and I was grateful doing penances and sacrifices, and then I was very devout in Trinidad, baptizing babies and hearing people's confessions and doing all the sacraments.

It was in 1972 I had a very serious accident where I was treated, unconscious after the serious accident and then after that time when I got out of the hospital in the sanitarium, I began searching in the Bible for what is true. That took me 14 years of comparing the Bible to Catholicism before I realized that I was dead in trespasses and sins and it was by grace alone that we are saved. One night I got on the floor in my house and I cried out to

God for faith and his grace to save a wretch like me, dead in trespasses and sins, and he gloriously did that.

It was about two months afterwards, I very reluctantly left the Catholic Church because my prayer after I was right with God, my biblical salvation was that I could really love Catholics and give them the real true Gospel of grace, that it is grace alone, faith alone, and in Christ alone. But then in prayer over those two months after I was saved, the Lord showed me that I could best serve him and love Catholics if I left actually the priesthood and the Catholic Church and reached out to Catholics nonetheless, and I did that, I left the priesthood in 1985 and reached the States in 1986, and I just prayed and prayed that I would have a love for Catholics to reach out. I thank the Lord that after one year as a missionary in China, I was able to start the ministry that I now have called beranbeacon.org. It is to show Catholics the real truth of where salvation is in a person not in any Church and is by God's grace not by any ritual that any Church does.

So this has been really wonderful I've seen priests saved, I saw two priests in Poland, you know, through our ministry we have a Polish webpage besides many other languages and of course in English and I thank God that I have seen God's grace poured out and that is my heart's desire, Larry, that Catholics would know the truth and that evangelicals in this very false ecumenical age would see the differences. I have a very interesting article on the webpage, "Are Catholics Christians," and we've had tremendous response to that, evangelicals whose eyes have been opened in reading that article. So it's with love for Catholics and to show the truth of Christ Jesus that God would be glorified and many many souls saved particularly Catholic to the glory of his name.

Larry. Outstanding. That was a wonderful testimony, Richard, could you just real briefly tell us about the you've written some books and you've already mentioned your ministry but what are these books you've written and how can people find them?

Richard. Yes, I have written or edited, written some and edited others, and they have been amazing. I just thank God. Our most well-known book is "Far from Rome, near to God: the testimonies of 50 converted Catholic priests." Since 1994 that book has sold steadily across the world in English and in other languages and it's on the third edition now. And the other book that has my heart really displayed and my love for Catholics is the book I've written about Catholicism called "Catholicism East of Eden: insights into Catholicism for the 21st century." This book is published by Banner of Truth Trust like the book of the 50 testimonies of former priests and I thank God for that because the Lord has used that book and brought many Catholics to himself by that book. The other book that my heart was in in editing together with Mary Hertel is a book called "The truth set us free: 20 former nuns tell their stories," and that book has been used mightily of the Lord as well and I thank God for those women most of whom are still alive and active in reaching out to Catholics themselves and it is just a wonderful testimony of God's grace. And the the other book I've written is called "On the wings of grace alone," I've edited that and that is just 30 ordinary Catholics and what we call lay Catholics and how the Lord brought them to salvation. That is a an amazing book too.

How can you obtain these books? Well go to our web page bereanbeacon.org and just go to the folder on the left hand side, "books," and when you click on that it gives all the details of how you can get those books.

Larry. Outstanding. Well, Richard, we're gonna go into showing people your videos now here across particularly our audience on YouTube but many people don't know that you and me go to the same church here in Austin, Texas, so it gives me a special opportunity to be around you a lot just so we can do ministry work. But anyway, I want to thank you for allowing us to post your videos on the internet through YouTube and other internet servers.

Richard. Praise God and may souls be saved and the Lord glorified, amen and amen.

Larry. Amen.

Announcer. Welcome to Contrast, Richard Bennett's converted Catholic priest, now evangelist, presents Contrast. Your comments and questions will be greatly appreciated. Permission is given to record and copy the entire message. And now here is Richard Bennett.

Richard Bennett. It is good to be with you again and I thank you for viewing. We have a Contrast today which is quite interesting, it is the contrast between someone trying to be a bride of Christ and then many many years later discovering what it is to be truly a Christian and to be accepted into Christ and to be wonderfully saved. So this whole idea of a mystical brideship of a lady to Christ is what is involved in Roman Catholicism in the convent. The concept of being united to the deity by being a virgin is not to Catholic alone, the tradition goes back to pagan times. We had, for example, the Vestal Virgins in Rome who kept the sacred fires. They had the idea that they could be mystically united to a deity and we had the famous Holy Virgins of Peru under the Incas who in a similar way thought that they could by their virginity somehow be united to God in their holy living. Probably most famous of all we had with the Buddhist nuns, that tradition, that through illumination like Buddha himself wanted to achieve with the divinity, with the divine person, these nuns through their virginity could reach a mystical union with God. But we are talking today and the contrast today is about this mystical union that the Catholic Church purports that a person, a young lady can be a bride of Christ.

So this is what we've got to face and I'm very happy to have here today with me Mary Ann Pakiz, who had been a Benedictine Sister for 4 ½ long years in her effort and her desire to be a bride of Christ. So Maryanne Packys, most welcome to the program today.

Mary Ann Pakiz. I'm very happy to be here today and to have the opportunity of sharing my testimony. The one thing that I would like to make clear at the very beginning is that I have a great deal of love for the Catholic people. I have many Catholic members of my family and my one desire is that they would come to know the truth and have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in their lives.

My concern, of course, is that in the convent we were not taught the truth of God's word. The emphasis, of course, was on the teaching Magisterium of the Church and of the rule of Saint Benedict, although in themselves like the rule of Saint Benedict the main thrust through his rule was that we were to live lives of peace, the motto of the Benedictines is Pax or Peace, peace at all costs, that we should be very good to the sisters and try to care for one another.

Richard. Yes, I can see already, Mary Ann, tears in your eyes as you say that. I know that from talking to you on the phone many times that you have a deep love for Catholics and it's in that deep love for Catholics that I have myself that we want to share what may be difficult things, but we try to speak the truth in love so that eyes may be opened and people may realize what it is to be in Christ Jesus. So, I thank you for your compassion.

As we begin, can you tell the viewer what it is or why it was that you desired to be a bride of Christ in the Benedictine Sisters?

Mary Ann. Well, probably at first I wasn't thinking exactly about being a bride of Christ. I didn't know exactly the process involved in becoming a full-fledged nun. But my desire for going into the convent was that I wanted to serve God in a very special way, and I had the idea that maybe if I became a nun, I could be guaranteed a ticket to heaven. I thought that this would be the best way to go about it.

The influence of the Sisters at a Catholic hospital where I worked in order to earn money for college played an important part in my life. They were very kind people. They were very good to the patients and they were very good to the co-workers. They were just so very nice and sweet I wanted to be just like them. So that was one of the factors that caused me to think of going into the convent.

Richard. Yes, you had sent me a picture one time when we were preparing your testimony for the book that we have of 20 former nuns, "The Truth Set Us Free: 20 Former Nuns Tell Their Stories," this book when we were compiling it, you had sent me a picture of yourself in a bridal gown with many other young women and they were attempting to be brides of Christ. Was that a special service that you had? What is the mindset of the Catholic Church behind this idea of becoming a bride of Christ?

Mary Ann. Well, I would say that when you consider the mindset, I think really and truly the real mindset is that the nuns are the backbone of the Roman Catholic Church. Without the teachers and nurses and the nursing home care nuns, where would the Catholic Church be? I think that the primary goal here is financial. They are the ones that keep the Church going and keep the Church solvent. However, also in this, of course, there's the propagation of the Catholic faith and the Catholic nuns are the ones who certainly do that.

In regard to the bride of Christ ceremony, that was one in which we were attired in a beautiful white wedding gown and veil, and we had flowers and beautiful music. This took place in the convent chapel and on the sides of the aisle of the convent chapel there would be our parents and different friends and family wishing us happiness, even though

I'm sure some of the parents didn't understand. I remember one of the fathers of one of the Sisters was crying, sobbing terribly. He did not want his daughter to become a nun. His voice could be heard all throughout the chapel. Then we marched down the aisle just as you would in a regular wedding ceremony. We came to the altar and then we, it kind of became very clear that we were united to an invisible spouse and one who is mystical. I found that the term "mystical" has been something that the Catholic Church employs each time they want to get the people to believe something without understanding it. They will tell the people that you really and truly don't have to understand this, it just is accepted.

So "mystical" covers a great deal of deceit, even, because in no way were we marrying the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what I thought, I was becoming a bride of the Lord Jesus Christ but it turned out that the Christ that we married was truly, in essence, antichrist because of the fact that he would teach things which were contrary to God's word and that certainly God cannot lie, he cannot change, and therefore he could not at all be the true Christ. So it was a terrible realization all of a sudden to realize I had married Satan.

Richard. Yes, that is rather shocking and really putting it really forcefully, and we know that this is very hard to say but when you are purporting to be married to Christ and you know that this is not possible in any mystical union, that it is only by grace through faith that somebody is accepted into Christ through the Gospel and not through any mystical doings or any feelings or emotions or ceremonies or bridal dresses or music or flowers, it's truly as you recognize that you're a sinner before the all holy God and you believe on Christ Jesus and him alone, by his grace, then you are accepted into Christ and then you are identified with Christ. It's not a mystical union, it is a real legal union because it is God has justified us, the legal term that is used, for example, in Romans 3 and other parts of Scripture, that we are justified, accepted before God, the all holy God because of Christ Jesus' finished work and his redemption. So this is why you were saying those strong words that it was not the true Christ that you were mystically united to but a false one, and that it was the one who is against Christ and not Christ himself.

Now what I'd like to address with you, Mary Ann, is something quite difficult but I know from interviewing other nuns and some of the responses we get to these programs, that many people are quite interested in what goes on in the convent, and there are some things that have got to be addressed from somebody who lived the convent life. So while this is difficult, I think it is quite necessary.

I would like to go to the Catholic News report that was published in January, 2003 when the Catholic News report was making it known to the Catholic world what had been previously published from the St. Louis Post Dispatch carrying the disturbing report picked up by other major media outlets throughout the world the research at the St. Louis University paid for by many orders of religious nuns that shows, "About 40% of all nuns in the United States have suffered from some form of sexual trauma. The study was undertaken in 1996 and reported that in some respected but small circulation religious journals in 1998, but not picked up by the mainstream media. One in 8 nuns said she had been sexually exploited. Of these, nearly 3 of every 4 maintained that she had been

sexually exploited. Of those, nearly by a nun, a priest or a nun or another religious person. This is difficult to read. The exploitation included everything from pressure for dates, for sexual favors, to sexual intercourse."

Now difficult, difficult to read because it's talking about nuns being victimized and 1 in 8 saying there was sexual trauma, and then of that 1 in 8, 3 of every 4 said they were victimized by a priest, a nun, or another religious person. That's probably a religious brother. Mary Ann, in your life in the convent, was there any warning or any intimation that you might be victimized by a priest?

Mary Ann. Yes, Richard, there was a warning and I'm very thankful that our Novice Mistress was honest enough to tell us that we had to be very careful. When we were done serving our novitiate here, that was a year where we were, you might say, more or less cloistered, she told us that pretty soon we would be exchanging our white veil for the black veil and we would be going out into the community, and she said there is one thing I want all of you to remember and that thing is that you must travel in pairs and you must never go to a priest's rectory by yourself. If you do, he is going to ask you to, or he is going to take you to bed with him.

I was very thankful that she had told us that, and she also mentioned that two parishes where we had to be very careful, and I was familiar with those two parishes and I just couldn't comprehend how these older men would be preying upon young women who were aspiring to be nuns. I feel very strongly about this. I feel that those priests took away something which they had no right to take away. They took away the virginity of young women. Now these women who were espousing to be mystically united with Christ, were also supposed to be virgins, that they gave up their, you might say, marriage rights, whatever, to serve Christ. Well, the priest, then, in taking them to bed with him, violated their virginity. He had absolutely no right to do that, to think that someone from the Church would violate these young women. Now some of these young women did not stay in the convent. They moved on and left the convent and got married and the husband got damaged merchandise, merchandise that had been damaged by a priest, maybe even the priest that married the two.

I feel that this is something which has to be addressed. I think we've touched only the tip of the iceberg in regard to the sexual abuse which is in the convent. A lot of the sexual abuse committed by priests has come out but there still is much more to come out. I think that even though, I should say even though the Novice Mistress told us to be careful about these certain priests, she knew that this existed. My question is why then if the Church knew that these men were doing this, why did they allow these young women to be put into harm's way? They certainly were not acting as shepherds over these young dear women. And what about the parents of these young girls? They had sacrificed, given their daughters to serve God in a convent and yet the daughter was abused. That is not right.

Richard. This seems to be rather horrendous and I'm shocked to hear what you say. What was the response of the Sisters themselves? Did they take this very seriously or how did

the Sisters respond when the Mother Superior, Sister Superior said that they could be victimized by a priest?

Mary Ann. I remember that they just kind of giggled and they thought that this was silly, but at the time there was a red flag that appeared in my brain and I thought, "Hey, what am I doing here? Am I in the right place? This is something I don't want." And consequently whenever I had occasion to be around the priests, I would put up a wall between the two of us. I was very careful in my interaction with them because I did not want this to happen to me.

Richard. Yes, well, now that is quite horrendous and it's a whole story in itself and I know that this St. Louis Post Dispatch that came out in 2003 was because many Sisters are conscious that the investigations that are going on should be done also in nun's convents and not just in the quarters of priests and to do with the confessional and the scandals that have happened, because many nuns themselves are conscious and that's where that whole report came from, because many religious orders wanted to make investigations, and I think that much more needs to be done. But this report talks about being victimized by another nun and that's startling because that's what we call lesbianism and did you know of anything like this in your life in the convent?

Mary Ann. Yes, I do. I even experienced a lesbian Sister trying to seduce me which I found to be extremely repulsive. It was such that she was a Sister Superior and she was built like a gorilla so there wasn't too much chance, I mean, to escape her clutches. But it turned out that one day she had me in her office and she was trying to seduce me through her conversation and I resisted her, and then finally someone knocked at the door and I was able to escape down the hall.

Then shortly after that, she decided to take away the keys to our rooms. There were four of us young Sisters and she took away the key so we could not lock our rooms at night. I remember waking up one night and finding this figure clad in a white nightgown on the end of my bed talking to me and using seductive language. I froze. I really had difficulty. I just didn't know what was going to happen. But nothing did happen, but then she returned night after night hoping to be able to seduce me through conversation.

Consequently because she would not return my key, I began to develop chest pains and I'm sure they were the result of anxiety. This anxiety was mimicking a heart attack, so I had to go to the hospital and the convent doctor was very knowledgeable and he recognized that there was something really troubling me. When I told him about this, I said that I had asked the Sister Superior if I could go to the Mother House. I wanted to talk to the Reverend Mother. I wanted to leave the convent and the Sister Superior, the one that would come into the bedroom at night, refused. She said, "No, you may not go and see the Reverend Mother. I forbid it." So I mentioned this to the doctor and the doctor said, "Don't worry. I'm going to find a way for you to escape. I'm going to find friends who are going to supply the getaway car. I'm going to also provide you with a very small suitcase. Pack just a few things that would take care of you for maybe an overnight stay at the villa." I don't know exactly how the escape plan was done, all I

know one day somehow the Sister Superior was not at the convent and someone came to tell me that there was somebody waiting outside of the convent for me. And I went and I was able to get to the Mother House. Now I talked to the Reverend Mother about this Sister and then she called the bishop and he was able, then, to give me permission to leave the convent, however, I would have to keep my vows until July, until those simple vows had run out.

Then I went home. I returned home with my parents and I had talked to one of my friends who was a parish priest and I had mentioned this to him, what had happened to me in the convent because this was one of the big reasons for my leaving the convent, my poor health had resulted from a Sister trying to seduce me. He, in turn, was very upset and he went to the local convent and talked to the other Sisters. They, in turn, called the Reverend Mother and soon I received a telephone call from the Reverend Mother in which she said, "You are to tell no one about what has happened to you in the convent or else." I was rather worried about the "or else" because I had learned in the convent about mental reservation and with this law of mental reservation, the Church is allowed to do anything they have to to a person who is considered to be sullyng the image of the Catholic Church and I thought that there might be some revenge, so I was very quiet. But then when the sexual scandal came out, I decided it probably would be better for me to come forward because I know that there were other Sisters in that convent who were being harassed by this Sister Superior.

Now to give this a bit of proof, it was after I got married, it would be probably about maybe 10 years after I had left the convent, I was invited to attend a funeral of one of the priests of one of the Sisters, brothers I should say, and there were six of us in the car as we traveled to a place which was about 100 miles away. And in the car there were, there was a priest, two nuns and three lay people and they were speculating on who would be at the funeral and the name of this Sister Superior who had tried to seduce me was mentioned. Also in connection with mentioning her name, they said that she had been sent away. They were trying to cure her of her deviant sexual behavior because she had done this to many other young Sisters. And so it was good that I heard confirmation of the fact that I was not the only one and that she, indeed, did have this problem. But the other thing I thought was pretty good too, is that they took action to try to see if she could overcome those habits. I really did appreciate that.

Richard. Yes, but they did not dismiss her from the...

Mary Ann. No.

Richard. ... state of religious life just like the priests who were found out to be in pedophilia and abusing young boys and sometimes young girls, that they are moved but they're not dismissed from the clerical state and this is where if the Church really was serious about what they are doing, they would dismiss either the priest or the nun when we have a serious sexual deviation, just like you have explained.

This is difficult to speak about and I thank you for the clarity and the compassion with which you spoke about it because it's got to be known that there can be victimization and I know I've heard it from another former nun, Patricia Nolan Sabbas(ph), when I had interviewed her some years ago on the radio. I was shocked that she spoke about the lesbian tendencies which she had experienced when she was a nun. She has a book of her story, "A Nun's Story," which she published under some real horrific insights into convent life, but to hear from you directly, Mary Ann, again is shocking but we're trying to reveal the truth of this type of life not established by God and it's quite unnatural and the things that can happen in this unnatural form of life.

Now to get into one of the other things in the convent and that is the whole idea of poverty, that the nuns besides the vow of chastity were supposed to be living a virtuous chaste life, they are supposed to be living a life of poverty, that they are poor. Now in my 30 years as a person in religious order, I was 30 years in the Dominican order, and I had met, of course, many nuns and many priests from other orders. I saw that this was quite well-heeled poverty. The convents were very well equipped with goods and everything that you needed and so were the priest's house, and they never seemed to lack anything. Did you really experience poverty or did the vow of poverty mean anything to you as a religious Sister?

Mary Ann. Well, let's say it, first of all, the vow of poverty wasn't a difficult vow for me because of the fact that I grew up in a poor family so when I went from my home to the convent, it was pretty much the same. You must remember, of course, that I was in the convent in 1950-1955 and things are pretty different right now. In those days we wore the black habits. We only had one habit. You know, I don't even remember if that habit was ever washed. We just had that one habit that we owned.

And talking about the vow of poverty, when you consider the space that we had in the convent, there was a large dormitory, it was sectioned off into about 18 sections, each one was about 5 feet by 7 feet. It consisted of a twin bed, one wooden chair and a bed nightstand. It didn't even have a bedspread on it, it was just a warm blanket. Now I suppose because I had grown up in a poor home, I would consider that as normal, that poverty for me, I would say it's almost subjective what you consider to be poverty. The girls who were in the convent in my class who came from Summit Avenue in St. Paul, they might have really viewed this as real poverty but I viewed it as, "Well, this is just like at home."

In regard to the clothes, as I mentioned, nowadays I'm not too sure how many outfits a Sister is permitted to have. When I was in the convent, we never ever saw any money. We just worked gratis. We never received a salary for anything that we did and they also have a law that when you leave the convent, you cannot sue for services rendered as a teacher or whatever, so that was actual complete service, just gratis.

Richard. Yes, so the poverty really makes the Catholic Church rich, that they get your salaries. You would have been paid a salary but you didn't see any of it.

Mary Ann. That's right. And then I was going to say, too, that if you were to go to the Mother House where I attended, you would open the front door and as you got into the big foyer, you would see a very plush room to the left and one to the right, but those rooms were used only for visiting guests and family members. I would say the rest of the convent was pretty sparse. The room where we had recreation in the evening was just a plain room. It had a large table that would accommodate about 20 people, and then there were 20 chairs. There were no decorations in it to make it attractive.

So I don't know if I would use the word exactly poverty or frugal, but they actually did not give us very much in the way of compensation other than the fact that we did receive our room and board and adequate meals. I would say adequate because having been raised in a poor home. Now the meals, they concentrated mostly on carbohydrates. We didn't have the luxury of having a t-bone steak or maybe some shrimp or a chicken breast. We would have maybe instead of steak we would have ground beef or ground up chicken or something like that to make the food stretch. So basically the meals were based upon carbohydrates, the things that would stick to your ribs but nothing extra special except perhaps on a holiday.

Richard. Yes, well, what about the vow of obedience? In the Scripture, Christ says his sheep hear his voice and whoever keeps his commandments loves him, you know, that we have a direct obedience to God through his word, but in the convent we have a different type of obedience. I'd like to read from the official law of the Catholic Church that applies to nuns. It's Canon 601, "The evangelical counsel of obedience undertaken in the spirit of faith and love in the following of Christ obedient unto death, requires a submission of the will to legitimate superiors who stand in the place of God when they command according to the proper constitutions." This idea of a superior standing in the place of God is nowhere in Scripture. We don't have anybody taking God's place. It's more of what you would find in the cults where somebody purports to be speaking for God and to obey him is to obey God. Did you find this type of blind obedience, shall I put it, that you had to obey, a type of unreasonable obedience in the convent?

Mary Ann. Well, I found that we were expected to give blind obedience but I'm the type of a person who tries to think through everything rather than giving blind obedience. For example, when I took my instructions to become a Catholic, the priest had asked me, "Do you have a Bible?" I said, "Yes." He said, "What kind is it?" I said, "A King James." He said, "That'll have to be burned. That's not the official Catholic Bible." So instead of bringing it to him to have it burned, I gave it to my mother. When I returned home from the convent, there I had my Bible presented back to me.

Also in this business of standing in the place of God, no one stands in the place of God. God stands in his own place. We have to remember what Scripture tells us even in Joshua, that if we are going to be serving other gods, that God will do us hurt. Now to give blind obedience to a human being and allowing that human being to do things to us that are contrary to God's word, it just doesn't make sense.

I think of the time that they were trying to break my will. They had said that because I was a convert to Catholicism, that my faith had to be tested more severely than the other Sisters. So I was given a lot of penances to do and one of the things that I did very often was that I had to go before the cross. That meant that the Sister Superior would write out a list of sins that I had supposedly committed. When I looked at that list of sins which she put on my pillowcase in my little space, there were words in that list of sins I did not know the meanings of, I didn't even know how to pronounce them, I had never done those sins, but yet I had to take that list and I had to go into the dining room where there were about 250 nuns and I had to kneel on the floor in front of the Reverend Mother. Behind her was a statue, or I should say, a crucifix and after I had finished confessing these sins which I had never ever done, they had me sit down on the floor and I had to take my meal on the floor. I have to say that I was there so many times before the cross that I began to recognize the Sisters by their ankles rather than by their faces.

I wasn't happy about this having to go before the cross, and one day I summoned up enough courage and I talked to the Sister Superior and I asked her, I said, "Why is it that I have to go before the cross and confess sins that I have never ever committed?" And her answer to me was, "Well, if you confess to the sins that you did not commit, God will forgive you the sins that you did commit." Now that was a red flag because according to the Scripture that I had read even prior to the convent, God does not operate that way. God does not lie. He would never do that. And so this is something which, of course, was either man-made, a man-made ruling, or it came directly from Satan.

Richard. Yes, well, this is where I want to come to the heart of the matter. I think you've really come to the kernel of the issue. Is this a man-made institution, not from God? And I think that this we have to face. I'd like to face this because we've got to hit it head-on by reading the official teaching of the Catholic Church and to see just how this is man-made and not of God.

I'm reading now from the Canon Law of the Catholic Church. This is the official teaching in the law of the Church and it is law or canon #573. Quotation, "The life consecrated through the profession of the evangelical counsel is a stable form of living by which the faithful following Christ more closely under the actions of the Holy Spirit, are totally dedicated to God." So this form of life the Catholic Church speaks of is more closely dedicated to God. More close than what? The only comparison that can be closer than marriage. So they're purporting to have a way of life that is closer to God than marriage.

Now if you take your Bible and go through the Bible to see what institutions God has established in his holy word, you will find that quite clearly God has set up from the beginning marriage. He has set up the state in which mankind live, and subject to his state, and he set up the local church. Besides these three institutions set up by God, we do not have any other form of life, and so to say that there is another form of life by which the faithful can be more closely united to Christ, to God, is just a lie. This is a man-made system and this is at the root of convent life and, of course, monastic life and all type of religious life, that we have a false system here that Christ Jesus did not set up monasteries or convents. In Christ Jesus' time, we had the Essenes who were a monastic group of men

living in Qumran where we have the Qumran scrolls, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in, was it 1947? But that was a monastery but Christ Jesus was not part of the monastery. He did not set up a monastery. There's no such thing as monastic life in Christendom or convent life.

Now for the Catholic Church to set it up as a form of life is just a lie and this is where you get young women going into this state of life which is unnatural. It is not right that women should live together with other women. It's not natural. It's not set up by God. Christ did not say a virgin shall leave father and mother and join himself to a group of other virgins and they shall set up a religious form of life. No, a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife and they shall become one flesh. He set up marriage, and he didn't set up any other alternative form where you had Superiors and Mother Superiors and Father Generals. This is a totally unknown system to the Scripture and that's what we've got to get into the kernel, Mary Ann, just to face this head-on, that the people of God have been, or the Catholic people have been bewitched by this form of life that doesn't exist in the pages of Scripture.

Now Christ Jesus did talk about celibacy but he said whoever can do it, let him do it. It's an individual thing between God and that individual. Like we have a young man at our church who says he can't get married, he wants to totally dedicate himself to God. Praise God. He's doing that under our local church and in line with other families with whom he works. So this is in the context of family and local church. He's not joining himself to a group of celibate men, he's working in the context of what God has given in a local church. Anyone who can take it, takes this call of being celibate or a virgin unto God, but to set up an institution, this is where we get all these obnoxious and horrific things like you talk about the lesbian Sister trying to seduce you. This is because we have an unnatural situation.

So I think that we have to come to the heart of the matter, Mary Ann, and I'd just like to go on a little bit before I come to ask you again by just saying that this is typical of Catholicism. I grew up in Ireland, you know, taking that sexuality in marriage is somehow polluted, you know, and I wanted to be a good friar, you know, Dominican Friar because, you know, marriage is somehow polluted, and I got this idea that the only true pure form of life is to be celibate, just like you would find to be a bride of Christ. And one of the things that is put into our minds when I was becoming a Dominican was the teaching of Thomas Aquinas where this is adamant where he speaks many times about virginity, and I'd like to quote from [unintelligible] part of the Summa Theologica where he talks about virginity and this is an exact quotation. "Virginity takes its name apparently from 'vigor' [freshness], and just as a thing is described as fresh and retaining its freshness, so long as it is not parched by excessive heat, so too, virginity denotes that the person possessed thereof is unseared by the heat of concupiscence which is experienced in achieving the greatest bodily pleasure which is that of sexual intercourse. Hence, Ambrose says that 'virginal chastity is integrity free of pollution.'"

So here Aquinas, the famous Catholic theologian that is recognized as the Doctor of the Church or the Angelic Doctor, talks about virginity as free from pollution, implying that

you are polluted if you get married. So this is the mindset of Catholicism and it is really serious and it's hard to say but it's got to be said because this is not the mind of God. It's the mind of Catholicism. What does the book of Hebrews say about marriage? It's honorable and undefiled, the very word. It's not polluted. It's undefiled. It's honorable. Marriage is honorable and the marriage bed undefiled it says in Hebrews. So I think that this has got to be addressed.

Now did you find that this attitude existed as you became a Catholic and then were a Sister and later on before you got saved, did you find this idea of this exaltation of virginity?

Mary Ann. Well, about the only place where I found the exaltation of virginity was when our Novice Mistress told us in one of her lectures that she had asked college students about intimacy and they felt that it was something very guttural which they did not enjoy at all. So she said, "Well, you see, you're not really and truly missing anything." So I'm sure that some of the girls who left the convent may have had some difficulty, they may have even experienced some guilt because a Novice Mistress, a person, shall we say, of the cloth, had told them this.

Richard. Yes, yes, so that shows the attitude behind what she was saying.

Mary Ann. But as far as other areas of my life, no, that was the only place where I heard that.

Richard. Yes, but you didn't grow up as Catholic like I did in Ireland and that was a staunchly Catholic nation, in the South of Ireland anyhow.

I know we're running out of time, Mary Ann, and I know our viewer wants to know something of your testimony. How did you finally become to be accepted in Christ? When was it that you really believed in Christ Jesus and his finished work alone?

Mary Ann. I will go to that, but first of all, I just want to say when you talked about the core of the problem, well, one thing which we have to do is to recognize that the Bible is our authority of faith. Now Catholics do read the Bible every now and then, but they mix it with human reasoning. The thing is in the interpretation of Scripture, there are two ways to exegete and eisegete, and if you're going to have exegesis, it means you're going to take from God's word exactly as it is. To eisegete means you're going to put into God's word and twist it and make it fit what your plans are.

So now going back to how did I get saved. It was a result of my girls. They were young then, one was 6, I believe, and the other one was 12. They had attended a backyard Bible club which was sponsored by Child Evangelism Fellowship. They came home and they were, the little girl was dancing around the kitchen singing, "My heart was black with sin until the Savior came in," and then they had Bible verses to memorize and, of course, I was listening to them and they told me that they had been saved, and I said, "Saved? Saved from what?" And they said, "Saved from our sin, that we have trusted in Christ and

now we're going to go to heaven when we die." And they were very busy making banners, making these banners that say, "Jesus saves," and they plastered them all over the walls in our basement. My husband being a contractor, had a lot of customers that came down through that basement to his office, and so they would be greeted with all of these banners.

Then they had the opportunity of studying individually with the leaders of Child Evangelism Fellowship, and usually every week there would come a new lesson and I would eagerly open up that lesson and read it and study it, and for about one year I was just eagerly reading this. And then I attended a girl's meeting meeting at the Baptist church and the little girls were giving their testimonies and it was at that time that the Holy Spirit convicted me of the fact that I was a sinner and that I could not save myself, that I needed a Savior who could save me.

And as I studied the word with the Baptist pastor then, he helped me to see that Jesus Christ, the real Jesus Christ, is my substitute. He substituted in death for me. He took my place. He died as in my place to pay my hell, death penalty in full. Because of what he did, I can approach God's throne of grace because of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God now sees me not as Mary Ann Pakiz, he sees me in his Son Jesus Christ. He has imputed the righteousness of Jesus Christ to my account. He reckons me as righteous. I am not righteous in any way of myself but the righteousness which I have is in the Lord Jesus Christ and this is what enables me to come to God's throne of grace anytime that I have needs and he is there to fulfill those.

Richard. Yes, that is the, I can sort of hear right behind what you're saying the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 3, "But now the righteousness of God is revealed being witnessed by the law and the testimony and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ which is upon all them that believe, there is no difference for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption within Christ Jesus," where Paul is getting enthusiastic for the same thing you're speaking of, the righteousness of God. Christ's perfection credited to us, imputed to us because we have trusted on him alone and it is freely by his grace.

And that is wonderful that you came to that, Mary Ann, and when you did come to that, did you make an open profession of faith and were you later on baptized, or how did, or what happened?

Mary Ann. Well, yes, I was immersed after I understood the scriptural basis for going into a believer's baptism and I joined with a Bible-believing church for a while, and then I began to see that the ecumenical movement was making inroads and Chuck Colson and some of these others were looked up to as the way that we should go, and I realized that so much of what they were teaching was contrary to Scripture. I believe that the most important thing, as I said before, is that God's word remains our sole, absolute and final authority and that every single thing that comes our way we have to check out in Scripture just as the Bereans did. We have to check and see that if this be so. This is by far the most important thing. This includes even pastors who may be teaching us, that we

are to check them out in the light of God's word to make sure that we believe because God's word says this. Not just because a pastor says it. The most important thing I urge people who may be viewing this videotape, is that, please, spend time in God's word. It is God's Holy Spirit who explains spiritual verities to us. We do not need a Catholic system or any system to try to explain these truths to us. God's Spirit will do that if we look into his word and act upon what he said.

Richard. Yes, we understand spiritual things spiritually like the apostle told us in 1 Corinthians 2. It is that spiritual things are revealed to us, the Spirit reveals through his written word and that is the wonder of Scripture.

In Mary Ann Pakiz' testimony in our book, "The Truth Set Us Free: 20 Former Nuns Tell Their Stories," she begins by explaining how absolute is the written word as an authority. That is the whole way your testimony begins, written testimony.

Mary Ann. Yes.

Richard. So I think it's really good that you said that. In the time remaining, I'd just like to read an official quotation from the Catholic sources where they are talking about why it is they have such things as religious life and celibacy and virginity and this is from the document [unintelligible] from the Post Vatican II documents and I'm reading word for word from the document. It says, quotation, "In any case, the Church of the West cannot weaken our faithful observance of our own tradition. It is unthinkable that for centuries she has followed a path which, instead of favoring the spiritual richness of individual souls and of the People of God, has in some way compromised it, or that she has with arbitrary juridical prescriptions stifled the free expansion of the most profound realities of nature and of grace."

The Catholic Church says it's unthinkable that through all these centuries she may have stifled the very realities of nature and grace, and that her traditions could have done this, but if we measure those traditions, one of them being this idea of being a bride of Christ or in the convent to have a closer uniting of yourself to Christ and to God by this form of life, this is just a lie and this has stifled the lives of many many thousands and thousands of women's lives and men's lives. We have about 800,000 nuns at the moment and, you know, if we go back through history, we talk about millions of nuns and religious brothers and religious priests. So this is a stark reality that we have a form of life that does not exist in the pages of Scripture.

So, precious viewer, this is something that you have to deal with. If you are to be right with God and with peace with God, that you would know that you have an authority that is found on the pages of Scripture and of Scripture alone; that we have as Christ Jesus said, a word that cannot be broken. The Scripture cannot be broken, Christ Jesus said. "Thy word is truth." We have an absolute basis of truth, the mind of God portrayed for us in the written word of God, and this is what you have to examine things by.

Now we'd ask that you begin that search and see that the mind of God is clear, it is easy to read the Scriptures, and it is easy to see just what the truth of God is, and what is most glorious of all and we were speaking about this on the phone, Mary Ann, was that what is beautifully portrayed in the pages of Scripture is the everlasting life that we have in Christ Jesus; that this is life everlasting, that we would know the one true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Could you give us your thoughts on that, just what eternal life is and how the precious viewer could see that they could come into this eternal life that is ours?

Mary Ann. Well, eternal life, of course, is a gift from God and this means that we can know right now that we are saved and it seems to be quite ironical that in the Catholic Church there are anathemas in which people are cursed, so the Catholic Catechism states that if any person says that they can know for sure that they have eternal life right now, let him be anathema, let him be cursed. So the Catholic Church then is cursing that which God has written in his word, therefore it shows that the Catholic Church is antichrist. It's not teaching according to what Christ has taught.

And the one verse which has meant a great deal to me is that I have wondered why is it that there are so many people who don't seem to be saved, and in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 it states that there are people "who perish because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." So shall we say when we're witnessing to people and they decide not to listen to the truth, they don't love the truth, they would rather believe a lie? Well, then God allows a strong delusion to come upon them and they are stuck in that lie and they don't seem to be able to be convicted by God's Holy Spirit any longer. They hang on to that lie. And that is the terrible thing about the Catholic Church that we have to realize.

I must add, first of all, it's not the Catholic people. The Catholic people are dear people whom God loves. God wants them to be saved, every one of them, but it's the Catholic system which has polluted their minds and they have chosen to believe a lie instead of the truth. As Christians, it is our privilege to go forth with the true Gospel of Jesus Christ and to present them and to persevere in this work so that all four corners of the earth will be reached with the Gospel.

Richard. Yes, and that's the good news that we finish on, that I should cry out to God. He is faithful and true, and as you desire to know the truth, Christ Jesus said, "If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed." You will know the truth and as you desire the truth, you find it and you trust in Christ alone and you know that you're gloriously saved and you know that it is God's gift through grace, and you have that joy unspeakable and full of glory that the Apostle Peter speaks of. So this is the good note that we finish on. Everlasting life is there. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a commandment.

We'd love to hear from you. Thank you for viewing and email address is available, you will see it on your screen, and our webpage address. The Lord bless you mightily and thank you for viewing. Bye-bye.

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