



Confessions of a Gay Priest: A Memoir of Sex, Love, Abuse, and Scandal in the Catholic Seminary

Tom Rastrelli

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In *Confessions of a Gay Priest*, Tom Rastrelli turns the hushed internal workings of Catholic priesthood inside out.

Rastrelli joined the priesthood amid its national sex abuse scandals and despite abuses that he himself survived. In his spiritual and sexual coming-of-age story, he recalls how his desire to come out was squelched; he was told to lie to a seminary admittance board and deny his attraction to men. He also relates fulfilling and ecstatic moments as he pursued his calling, all while exposing abusers who were sheltered by their superiors.

Clear tension between celibacy and sensuality arises as Rastrelli recalls both erotic relationships and heartbreaking ones, the latter characterized by uneven power dynamics and cruelty. He escaped into nature, singing, and driving, seeking freedom and distance on the road; family, friendships, and therapy also helped.

With the knowledge that the Catholic Church is diverse when it comes sexual orientation, but still denies the rights and godliness of homosexual priests and people, the book includes striking illustrations of dysfunctional and hypocritical church practices. In one scene, wide-eyed seminarians are taken to a conference of bishops like lambs to wolves. They are hustled past gay Catholic protesters demonstrating against the church's heterosupremacy and into a banquet, where, though searching for allies, they are put on display for old and powerful leaders to leer at, before being escorted out past the protesters again.

As Rastrelli gets angrier, the book picks up momentum. He is shown growing as a person and into his calling, from a hopeful college student who was hungry for love and who wanted to do good into someone who is disillusioned, with cause.

Confessions of a Gay Priest is a heartfelt, courageous memoir about cruelty and salvation, with a transparent consideration of the inner politics of the Catholic Church.

MEREDITH GRAHL COUNTS (May / June 2020)

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