

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Michael Mack
Writer / Actor

Contact: Fr. Mike McGarry
Director, Paulist Center of Boston

www.michaelmacklive.com

www.paulistcenter.org

Vatican Summit: Catholic Paulist Center of Boston Responds

Hosts Play "Conversations with My Molester" about Clergy Abuse

[Boston, MA] During the Vatican's first-ever worldwide summit on clergy sexual abuse, the Catholic Paulist Center of Boston presents the autobiographical one-man play ***Conversations with My Molester: A Journey of Faith***, written and performed by Cambridge playwright and actor Michael Mack -- a clergy abuse survivor who returned to the church after 40 years -- for two (2) performances.

At the Vatican summit in Rome, scheduled February 21-24, leaders from every Catholic bishop's conference worldwide will convene, including Pope Francis. At the Paulist Center in Boston, Michael Mack will perform his solo play in advance of, and during, the Vatican's extraordinary summit for 2 shows in February (Sat. 2/16 and Sat. 2/23, both 7:30pm).

Fr. Michael McGarry CSP, Director of the Paulist Center church, wants to ensure that abuse survivors remain front and center. "As we in the Paulist Center community reflect on the clergy sexual abuse crisis in our Catholic Church, I wish to help us keep our eyes focused on the plight of the survivor," he said.

Fr. McGarry directs the Boston parish of the Paulist Fathers -- the first order of Roman Catholic priests in America. He was president of the order from 2010-2014. The Paulist Center is known for its focus on reconciliation and social justice.

Playwright and performer Michael Mack premiered ***Conversations with My Molester: A Journey of Faith*** at the Boston Playwrights Theatre at Boston University in 2012, at the 10-year anniversary the start of Boston's abuse crisis. The 90-minute solo performance was directed by Boston stage veteran Daniel Gidron, and portrays Mack's full-circle odyssey away from -- and back to -- the Catholic Church. Since its premiere, it has won multiple prizes, and received rave reviews from both religious and secular sources for its nuanced portrayal.

Fr. McGarry saw Mack's play in 2013, and was struck by its authenticity and complexity. "Even though we may keep an 'imagined survivor' in mind, we may not hear a real survivor's voice raise the important and penetrating dimensions of this issue. For this reason -- giving a thoughtful presentation of a survivor's point of view -- *Conversations with My Molester* is critically important at the Paulist Center community."

When Mack was a boy of 11 living in North Carolina, he dreamed of becoming a priest. That changed when his pastor invited him to the rectory "to help make a costume for a play." The event left Mack shaken. He soon left the church, but for decades imagined one day meeting his abuser for a conversation.

He had that chance in 2005, learning that his onetime pastor was not only still alive, but living nearby in Massachusetts. What happened next was beyond anything Mack ever imagined.

Including his return to the church. "I was as surprised as anyone," Mack said of becoming a practicing Catholic again. "When I was a child I loved the church, but that was taken from me. Returning as an adult, and exercising my voice within it by telling my story, is a way to reclaim the church as mine."

Michael Mack, a graduate of the MIT Writing Program, is an acclaimed Cambridge poet best known for his multi-character solo play *Hearing Voices, Speaking in Tongues* -- about his mother's life with, and recovery from, schizophrenia. Mack has been much in demand for the play, which he began while a student at MIT, and has since performed at the US Library of Congress, Off-Off-Broadway at the Times Square Arts Center, at Harvard and Yale universities, and for scores of professional conferences -- including the FBI's 32nd Annual Hostage Negotiation Seminar.

Mack is two-time winner of an Artist Fellowship from the Massachusetts Cultural Council -- the state's most competitive and prestigious individual arts grant. His work has received feature coverage from *The New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, and NPR.

Conversations with My Molester: a Journey of Faith will be performed over 2 consecutive weekends at the Paulist Center, located at 5 Park Street in Boston -- half a block from the Park Street MBTA station. Tickets \$10 at the door.

Post-show discussions on both nights will feature Mack and Fr. McGarry welcoming the audience into a talkback about the issues raised by the play, and by the abuse crisis itself.

Saturday Feb. 16 7:30pm
Saturday Feb. 23 7:30pm

Open to the public. Call the Center at 617-742-4460.

Learn more at
www.michaelmacklive.com