

**FROM THE DESK OF
STEVEN M. CANTRELL, M.D.**

I am a graduate of Palma High School, a professional in my community, a husband, and a father. I am also a victim of childhood sexual abuse committed by a man who was both a Catholic priest and a serial predator who held a position of trust at Palma. I have chosen to file a claim arising out of the abuse I suffered and to do so publicly. The choice to go public was very difficult. However, I ultimately realized that I could not, in good conscience, let Christopher Spedden stand alone as the sole public victim of abuse at Palma. Although I do not know Mr. Spedden, I respect him for coming forward publicly, I believe him, and I want to support him now by letting him, and this entire community, know that he does not stand alone. He was not the only victim.

My family is a Palma family. For nearly thirty years, we have been involved directly and indirectly with the school. We have cheered Palma's many successes, and during times of failure, we have always had confidence that Palma would recover and be better than it had been. I gave extensive thought about how my decision to come forward publicly would impact my family, and I appreciate their support at this time more than they can ever know. Those of you who know us realize how difficult this is for all of us. Palma has been and, hopefully, will continue to be a great source of pride and joy in our lives.

Given that, it is not possible for me to put into words how I felt when I discovered that Palma had placed me and other children squarely in the path of a serial child sexual predator, Father Gerald "Jerry" Funcheon. I was just beginning my sacraments. In fact, by my own volition, I was baptized at Sacred Heart in Salinas on April 21, 1984, just months before Father Jerry was placed into my life.

Palma put Father Jerry in a position of power which provided him access to many boys. He was our campus priest and religion teacher at Palma. I now know that prior to the apparently routine shuffling of "problematic" clergy which resulted in his placement as a teacher at Palma, Father Jerry had over a twenty-year history of sexually abusing boys. When he first stepped foot onto our campus, he was an experienced child predator at the top of his game. His victims were boys taught to respect and trust the campus priest. What happened to his victims was not our fault.

To my knowledge there are now a total of three Palma victims who have either filed a claim or are considering doing so. I suspect there are more. My hope is that any Palma alumnus abused by Father Jerry or any other faculty member will come forward, publicly or privately, because I believe doing so will help bring closure to the sexual abuse we endured.

Up to now, Palma's conduct has not been helpful. Hopefully, the leadership of the school will see fit to change their handling of this situation. It would be beneficial if the school's administrator(s) reached out to victims instead of issuing public statements limited to assurances that its financial assets are safe and that no child molesters currently work there. I believe it is not too late for Palma to live up to the same morals they have instilled in young men for over 60 years. The response to this situation will be the truest measure of Palma's moral character.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven Cantrell, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" and "C".

Steven M. Cantrell, MD
Palma High School Class of 1989