

I was a member of The Palmarian Church from birth until I left of my own accord at the age of sixteen when I came to realize the teachings of this Church to be fundamentally flawed.

The aftermath of my departure had a profound effect on me as I tried to come to terms with the fact that everything I was brought up to believe was a fabrication, a lie. This led to several years of heavy drug use and alcohol consumption, during which time the many unanswered questions were never far from my mind.

Now looking in from the outside, I could see quite clearly the abnormal behavior of the members, my family stayed in the church and were well respected among Palmarians, which made my leaving all the more shameful. My grandfather was made a saint by Clemente and my father was personally congratulated by Fr Isidore when he closed the sale on the Irish HQ of the Palmarian Church. Palmarians regularly visited my house while I was there and my home contained a Cenacle (a palmarian altar and "official" dwelling place of God) I got the feeling that my fathers attempts to force me back to the church through intense arguments and emotional blackmail were more due to his own shame in the face of other palmarians than a genuine concern for my soul.

I experienced first hand the attitude Palmarians have toward ex-palmarians or apostates as we are called. I was disowned and written out of the will within 24 hours, when I was to leave the house all contact was to be severed - no question - I still see my mother sometimes but she will not even look at me.

During the many arguments regarding the Church I came to see the complete ignorance of the palmarian faithful. They relied completely on the leadership for guidance and instruction, unable or unwilling to see the most blatant of holes in the Palmarian Doctrine the leadership were never wrong no matter how outrageous the words.

From a very young age I attended Catechism, religious class. This was a blatant tool to expose the young mind to Palmarian Doctrine and all it contained, my head was regularly filled with the apocalyptic imagery and prophecies, always with the drilling that if you stay in the Palmarian Cult you will be saved, if you were to leave your fate would be so much worse than someone who was never Palmarian, you chose to reject the truth and so are automatically damned - no question.

These classes were a calculated attempt to instill the mortal fear of the doom laden future into the young mind, with the only chance of redemption being membership of the Cult. The aim of this? To ensure you never leave and with time become as dependent on the Cult as your parents.

There were several different classes, each with 8 or more people. I can remember the glazed expression on some, the puzzlement on others, I have seen some become fanatical their whole behavior change, some impassive & even some liberal, these were usually the ones to leave.

It did work I must admit, some my earliest memories center around the terror evoked by

images of an apocalyptic future, everything that I loved and knew were to be taken away from me in the most brutal and violent way possible, all my friends were to die, Ireland was to be destroyed in a blaze of fire. The end was to come suddenly and we should lock our doors and not answer to anyone no matter if we knew them or how terribly they would scream, as the terrible retribution rained down upon them.

These images were presented to me as fact by my “teachers” and verified by my parents, the people I should trust more than anyone in the world, this made it all the more real and terrifying.

Objective questioning was frowned upon, even stopped abruptly, common occurrences were when a question would be put to the priest that had no answer for so he would try to bluff it, dithering his way through a half baked concept.

We would tend to accept this as we generally held him in high regard and interpreted his dithering as an attempt to find the words to explain complex beliefs to children, it never dawned on us that he didn't have an answer to begin with.

Since I have left, the Palmarian Church has got much more secular and downright hostile toward non-palmarians, the chances of young people being able to leave now are much slimmer than when I made the choice to walk. They are literally cut off from the outside world, the exposure to anything they could come to rely on upon leaving is gone. To some the alternative in their eyes would surely be homelessness, this will prevent them from ever building up the courage to leave.

For many years after leaving I had so many questions that were never answered, at some points I doubted my choice, what if it all were true? Ridiculous I know but that was the remnants of the early drilling I had.

Now I'm totally away from all things Palmarian, the feeling of freedom it brought was in equal measure to the feeling of loss at never be able to see my family again, however it something I must bear as I am sure many others do also.

To what point is The Church going? That is the question that plays on my mind now, to what end & will enough people get out before then? My one hope is that The Palmarian Church collapses under the weight of its own lies and the faithful finally let go of their pride and acknowledge the truth they know in their hearts.

To any Palmarian or recently ex-palmarian reading this, you're not alone in the thoughts you have, many before you have wrestled with the same but you have made the right choice, don't ever question that. Keep your head up, surround yourself with REAL friends and you will come out the other side.

Take care.