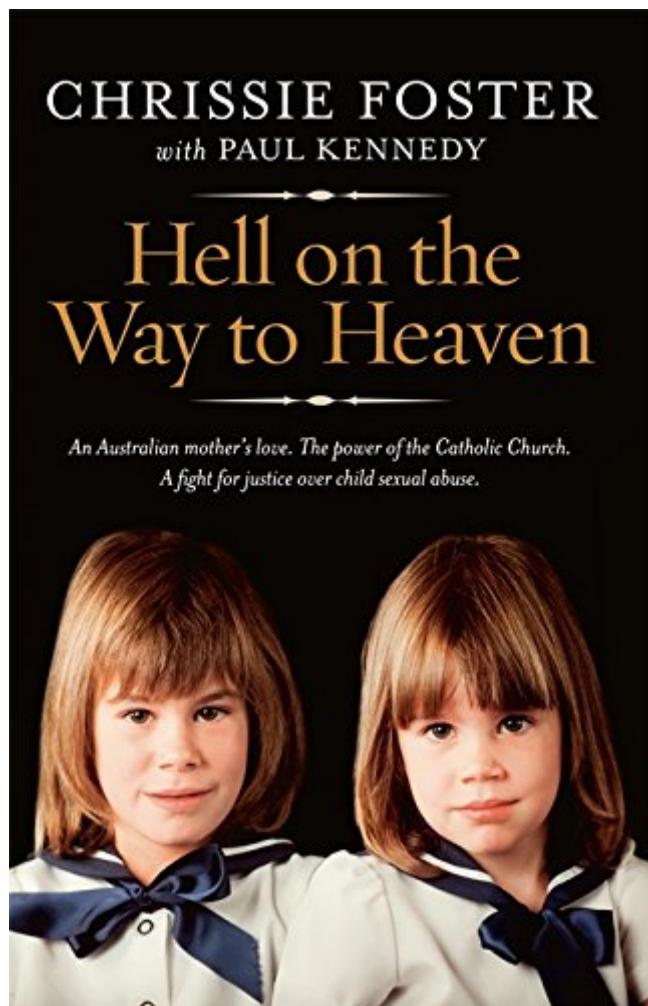


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# Hell On The Way To Heaven



## **Synopsis**

An Australian mother's love, the power of the Catholic Church and the fight for justice over child sexual abuse. Chrissie and Anthony Foster were like any other young family, raising their three daughters in suburban Melbourne with what they hoped were the right values. Chrissie could not have known that the stranger-danger she feared actually lurked in the presbytery attached to the girls' Catholic primary school. Father Kevin O'Donnell, a long-term paedophile, lived and worked there. Two of their young daughters became victims of O'Donnell. And once the truth was revealed, the Fosters began a battle to find out how this could have happened. The Church offered silence, lies, denials and threats. Meanwhile, their daughters tried to piece together their fractured lives. This is the chilling true story that made national and international headlines. Chrissie Foster's heartbreak account of her family's suffering, and their determination to stand up for themselves against the might of the Catholic Church, is testament to the strength of a mother's love, and the resilience of the human spirit.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A very sad story but an excellent read. As a former employee of the Catholic Church in both the school system & as Parish Secretary I can well understand how these things happen as in most cases the Parish Priest is a respected member of the community & well loved. Of course there are exceptions & far too many which makes it very difficult for the genuine priest who looks upon the parish as his family & the parish respect him as their leader. There is a lesson here for us all to learn. We MUST protect our kids & I am very glad that this didn't happen in my family. By covering things up & moving troublesome priests from parish to parish all they did was inflict the problem on other parishes, everyone suffers!! My hat goes off to the Foster family for their loyalty to each other & wish them all the best for the future.

This is a story that, I think, very much needed to be told. To be frank, I expected the book to be better written, given the quality of the Kindle preview I read. However, though it is uneven in terms of style and writing quality, the facts of the story speak for themselves and it remains a compelling read. Father Kevin O'Donnell spent the entirety of his fifty year clerical career sexually abusing the primary school aged children of parishioners, with few questions from the Catholic Church and none from the Church-run primary school that the Foster daughters attended, the grounds of which he resided upon in a rectory. Though the Church received complaints dating back to the 1940s or 1950s regarding the child-molesting proclivities of O'Donnell, its only response was to shift him between parishes whenever his activities threatened to be exposed, thus exposing many, many more children to sexual assault. Emma Foster, the author's eldest daughter, was, from the age of five, a repeated victim of molestation and rape at the hands of O'Donnell, who was free to simply pluck the children he fancied from their classes with no questions asked. Emma's younger sister, Katie, was similarly abused from the age of about seven or eight. Tragic consequences ensued in the case of both girls, and the Fosters endured a decade-long battle to receive adequate compensation from an institution far more interested in protecting its own reputation (and coffers) than in protecting children. The paedophile priest was never defrocked and died a free man. This story left me with the strong feeling that the Church is, at its upper echelons, an evil institution. More than that, it left me feeling intensely that, if there is to be any justice in this world, the Church must be held to account for its complicity in crimes against children. It should be held criminally as well as civilly liable, in my view. Though, as Chrissie Foster points out in her book, legal proceedings against the Church have, in the past, been hampered by the fact that it is not an incorporated body (and hence not a legal person able to sue and be sued in its own right - though this particular legal fiction is not fully explained in the book, I was aware of it due to my own legal training), I believe it

would be possible to hold to account the individuals in positions of power within it both with respect to the tort of negligence (through the doctrine of vicarious liability) and the criminal doctrine of complicity. There is Australian case law (being *Miller v The Queen* (1980) 32 ALR 321) surrounding the Truro murders, in South Australia, which held liable as complicit a man who transported the serial killer, Worrell, to pick up women (some of whom were killed and some of whom were not) without reporting his activities to the police. The High Court held that, after the first murder, the appellant was aware of Worrell's criminal purpose and, by continuing to transport Worrell and failing to report him to police, was complicit in it as a joint criminal enterprise. As an accomplice is liable as a principal, the penalties for the principal offence are applicable (see this link for further information: [...] My view is that the Church's actions with respect to the abuse of children is analogous to the facts in *Miller v The Queen*. The Church is a wealthy institution and thus civil suits, though useful to compensate victims, are unlikely to cause enough damage to provoke a change of policy (given that in Australia the purpose of awards of damages is to compensate for the Plaintiff's loss, not punish the Defendant; cf the USA). However, a few high-profile prosecutions of archbishops as accomplices to child sexual abuse is very likely to rather quickly induce the Church to cease its complicity for fear of criminal consequences. In any event, despite some patchy writing, the book is worth reading as an exposé of the ugly underbelly of the Catholic Church in Melbourne, particularly given the topicality and universality of the subject matter. I found myself caring very much for the Foster family as the story progressed, as well as feeling outraged on their behalf. I would love to be able to contact Mrs. Foster about the possibility of laying charges against the complicit elements of the Catholic Church, as well as simply to express my heartfelt sympathy.

very interesting

This family have been abused and traumatised by the Catholic Church and their hierarchy for many many years. In light of the recent announcement of a Royal Commission into abuse in institutions, I picked up this book out of interest. (For the record - it was released a few years ago though) Horrific recount. My heart bleeds for the Foster family. There are many people who should be answering questions within that Church.

I mistakenly reviewed *Holy Hell* by Patricia Feenan as this book. Sorry, they have a lot of similarities, the ruination of children's lives by Priests who are devils in disguise, & are aided & abetted by Rome. The difference in this sad tale is the death of one daughter, & one daughter left brain

damaged. You need to be strong to read the battle of these devoted parents. Sad Sad Sad It's a must read.

A heart rendering account of the havoc rendered upon a family by clerical abuse. This extremely brave woman took on the might and power of the Catholic Church with dogged determination to lay bear the affect of child abuse on her family and others - way to go Chrissie!! A compelling but tragic read which has been instrumental in bringing about a Royal Commission. JayJay

Fantastic writing and amazing courage to share such devastating stories

Brilliantly written and an great insight into not only child assault but the effects it has on families. Chrissie and Anthony have to be congratulated for their persistance and courage.

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