

## Berry presents on Vatican-focused investigative work

BY MAILE MUNRO  
STAFF WRITER

"I'm a 76-year-old Catholic, and I couldn't believe it," said Mary Orr.

Orr attended Jason Berry's presentation, "Pope Francis and the Church: Confronting Sexual and Financial Scandal" on April 3 in the Community Center.

Berry, an award winning investigative journalist, tackled the controversial subject matter he covers for the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting: the Vatican.

"I was heartbroken," said Orr, who came to the presentation after watching Berry's Frontline documentary, "Secrets of the Vatican." "It breaks my heart because I felt everything had been pulled out from underneath me by the men that put it there."

After a visit to a religious studies class, tea in the Hut and dinner with students, Berry presented to the public on his recent film and on material from his books, including "Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Catholic Priests and the Sexual Abuse of Children."

A Catholic himself, Berry wove his personal stories, investigative journalism experiences and critically acclaimed books throughout his talk. The audience left with a well-rounded grasp of the sexual abuse scandals in the Catholic Church and optimism for the change Pope Francis brings with him.

"I left thinking about how good of a storyteller he is," said senior Sara Besmertnik in an email interview. "He seems hopeful — like most others who pay attention to the Church — of the new pope."

Berry's optimism stems from his upbringing in New Orleans.

"When you're raised in a town where the grown-ups dress up in masks and dance in the streets, it gives you a certain optimism that humanity may make it after all," said Berry.

At the end of the talk, the floor was opened to the group, which was made up of students and members of the community.

Orr's personal testimony inspired a response from George Brunner, a full-time campus minister with the Greensboro Area Catholic Campus Ministries, who had brought a group of students from the Greensboro area.

"We need to recognize that our priests, albeit holy men, are human and they are going to make



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Jason Berry

### Fast facts:

- Author, investigative reporter, filmmaker
- Cultural chronicler of New Orleans
- Co-produced *Secrets of the Vatican*, a film investigating the Catholic Church's sexual abuse crisis and recent financial scandals. The film was recently shown on PBS.



Watch *Secrets of the Vatican* here:

mistakes and they are going to sin just as we do," said Brunner. "But, when they step on that altar and they are 'in persona cristi' ... we need to trust that through the words they are speaking, they are holding Christ, and that's why we have to go to mass."

Berry facilitated the consequent responses to Brunner's statement. One such reaction came from attendee Grady Scott.

"I'm a Catholic and I've struggled for years," said Scott. "The pedophilia, it's too psychotic and criminal for me to gloss over and say, 'This man is so holy ... I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt.'"

Scott's conflict is common among those who have grown up holding the Catholic Church in high regard. Berry mentioned this in his own struggle to reconcile the horrors of child abuse with the morals

of the Catholic Church.

"I don't want to destroy the Church," said Berry. "I want it to reform. I want it to be the Church that it was in my life when I was a kid growing up."

Jill Peterfeso, visiting assistant professor of religious studies, was impressed with how Berry approached this sensitive, complex issue.

"I've been in many gatherings where faithful Catholics are very upset about the sex abuse crisis," said Peterfeso in an email interview. "I felt he handled that with grace and compassion."

From jazz funerals and environmental violations to Nigerian playwrights and dramatic nuns, Berry has covered a wide array of subjects.

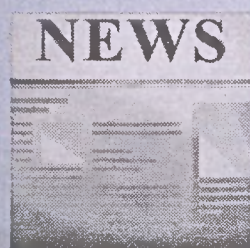
During his visit to Guilford College, Berry found a population of students ready to take action.

"It's encouraging to see so many young people who are centered on social justice," said Berry.

**'It breaks my heart because I felt everything had been pulled out from underneath me by the men that put it there.'**

Mary Orr, Catholic community member

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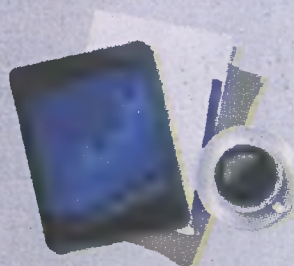
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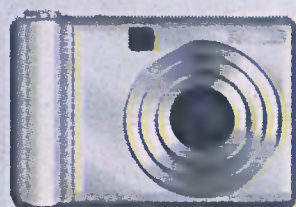
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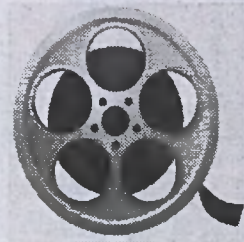
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