

May 13, 1994

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Mark:

This letter is in response to our conversation on Wednesday, April 27, 1994. The intent of this letter is to summarize the extent and effects of being sexually abused by Richard Coughlin during the period of 1972 through 1973.

Mark, it is imperative to emphasize that I am *just now* putting together the pieces of what happened to me in 1972 through 1973. I am just now (the past three months) understanding intellectually (with memories) and emotionally (connecting to my feelings and body memories) that I have been sexually abused by Richard Coughlin during my time in his choir. I am just beginning to experience some closure within myself regarding this deep issue and understand how this life shattering event has molded me as a boy, man, and human being.

This letter contains the facts of my experience as I remember them to date.

I am 32 years old, born November 15, 1961. My parents are Ray and Margaret Zapala. I was raised Catholic, and attended St. Anthony Claret Catholic school in Anaheim from first through eighth grade. I attended South Junior High School (Anaheim, CA) for my ninth grade year and attended Katella High School (Anaheim, CA) until graduating in 1979. I received a B.A. in Economics from UCLA in 1984 and a M.A. in Applied Economics from the University of Michigan in 1985. I currently live in Berkley, Michigan.

I joined Father Coughlin's Choir in fifth grade. The year was 1972. I was 11 years old. At that time I joined, the choir had been in existence one year. I attended rehearsals after school and during lunch times and attended concerts on the evenings and weekends.

In June of 1972 I traveled to Europe with the Choir. The following years, Father Coughlin was transferred to a parish in Costa Mesa. I continued attending practice in Costa Mesa on a weekly basis and giving concerts on evenings and weekends.

I left the Choir early in the school year of 1974, my seventh grade year.

I began Therapy in October of 1990. My Therapist is Dr. Loren Anderson. I have been seeing Dr. Anderson on a regular basis since. His address is:

Dr. Loren Anderson
Dearborn Pastoral Counseling Center
24110 Cherry Hill at Telegraph
Dearborn, MI 48124
Tel: 1-313-274-4570

There have been two lapses of time totally approximately 9 months when I did not see Dr. Anderson. This is because I was living in California on a temporary basis.

In addition to Dr. Anderson, I have been involved in Primal Integration Therapy since March of 1993. Barbara Valasis is the Director of the Primal Integration Therapy Center of Michigan. Ms. Valasis prefers not to be contacted by a lawyer.

For a brief time I attended a sexual abuse support group based around the 12 step program.

I started counseling primarily to address what I then saw as a work issue. I found myself, at that time, consumed by what I feared an obsessive drive to accomplish in the business world. Secondly to that, I wanted to resolve the inner confusion I had about my sexual identity.

Initially, in therapy, I focused on family relationship and my family history. It soon became apparent to me that my relationship with my father was a significant force in molding who I was at that point. My father was a primary focus of my first years in therapy.

Shortly after starting therapy, I began to experience a depression that I still am working out of today. As time went on, and I allowed myself to open up even more, I sank deeper into depression and was beginning to withdraw from my usual circle of friends. Additionally, I began to experience crying spells. Music, news stories etc. would trigger me into outbursts of crying. (I can look back now and say I was usually the trigger had to do with someone surviving as a victim of some sort.) I began to honor the crying and understand that I was grieving about something. I let the crying come as it did, and it grew in intensity.

In therapy, my dreams are often a source of discussion. Early on, I told my therapist of a reoccurring nightmare I have had since a young adult. The nightmare was of being sodomized by an unseen demon. I would be pinned to my bed, unable to move or speak, and unable to stop being sodomized by a demon. I would experience sharp pain in the side of my lower rib cage. Often, upon waking I would still feel the pain in my lower rib cage - even carrying it into the next day. We discussed this dream several times. I remember my therapist wondering "why have you become 'receptive'". At that point, I *never* associated it with sexual abuse. I tended to see the dream as spiritual in nature, perhaps "demonic".

I had not thought, talked about or remembered anything about my time with Father Richard Coughlin or the Boys Choir. I did, instead, continue to work at asserting myself to my father and establishing an identity of my own.

As I continued on this path the emotional outbursts grew. Since I lived with two roommates, I found myself taking drives alone for hours at a time. After finding a secluded spot, I would grieve and cry. Soon came inner urges to groan and make loud moaning sounds. I did not understand exactly what I was groaning about, I thought it all had to do with my father, so I directed it toward him in my mind. Intuitively, I knew I had to let these emotions out and, as I said before, I came to honor my feelings more and more. Mark, this continued for quite a while. I was becoming so withdrawn, my emotional energy was turning inward into this growing intensity in grieving. I would come home from work and spend the night grieving, crying, driving and groaning. I had some growing memories of my childhood to draw upon and some physiological concepts in father-son relationships to give me a frame of reference, but overall, my emotional state was haphazard and unclear.

In June of 1992, I received a call from my brother Paul. It was late in the night and he sounded upset. Apparently, my mother had received a call from a Joe Beckman. Mr. Beckman introduced himself as an ex-choir member who had been sexually abused by Father Coughlin. He was attempting to talk to other Choir members who might have been abused themselves and possibly build a lawsuit. I immediately called my mother and assured her that this had nothing to do with me and that I would call Joe Beckman back myself.

When I talked with Joe, he told me that someone had suggested that i may have been a victim myself. As he was talking to me, I was a bit restless and vague with him. He was a bit pushy and at the time, I felt like this didn't necessarily have anything to do with me.

Days later, as I thought back, I did remember spending time with Father Coughlin, going to Disneyland, going to Europe with the choir and taking trips to San Diego. I also remembered two instances where Richard Coughlin had gone into a shower with me, lathered me up with soapy water and bathed me. These were the first memories I had of my time with Richard Coughlin.

The next time I spoke with Joe Beckman, I didn't tell him my initial memory. I just told him I was in therapy for two years as it was and was working through my personal issues. He seemed to assume that there was abuse issues I was working through. I brushed off his attitude and figured my family was my main issue to work through. I lost contact with Mr. Beckman for a while.

I told two people what had happened, my therapist and a close friend of mine. At that time, my therapist told me that, in his opinion, what I described was sexual abuse. I had difficulty believing so, and was very confused about what constituted sexual abuse. I didn't talk much about this in therapy for quite a while, and my therapist didn't push it. I did not believe I had been sexually abuse and did not tell anyone else what I initially remembered.

About this time, I started having what I now call body memories and screaming outbursts. These started rather spontaneously, being what I would consider a step deeper beyond my emotional outbursts of crying and moaning. At first I did not know what was happening to me. I was in the basement when I was overcome with a

wave of emotions. This time, however, my body seemed to want to move on its own, and words started to come to my mind and, if I allowed them, be spoken out. I would now call it being overcome by another hidden, deeper part of myself that has been trying to get out. I let whatever come out, and called my roommate Jim down to sit with me, since I was somewhat fearful. I ended up twisting and contorting on the ground, rolling, shaking. There was surprisingly little emotion with these initial body memories. My body seemed like it needed to move. Later, Jim described it as ... "I thought you were possessed by a demon." Because of my extreme religious background, I, too, tended to think of my experiences in the realm of "demon's". I was confused, scared and unsure. I didn't speak of these experiences to anyone.

Screaming was the next addition to my emotional outbursts. As well as the usual moaning and crying, I found myself having to find safe places to scream. It was a matter of making myself scream, it has been a matter of allowing myself to let out this terror. As usual, I would take long drives, or scream into pillows in my basement with my stereo blasting. This continues, in some form, to this day.

This was the start of what has now come a regular part of my life. In therapy, in the middle of the night, any time, I feel overcome with these body memories and words associated with them. Over and over they have repeated. Slowly, over years, I have been able to put together the emotions, with the body memories, with the words.

In December of 1992, I was contacted once again by Joe Beckman. This time I was temporarily living in California. He asked me if I had any relevant information I could share with the Diocese. Joe was trying to build a case against the diocese to oust Father Coughlin from the priesthood and, hopefully, keep him away from children. though I wasn't convinced it was my memory was significant, I said I would tell what I remembered. At about this point, I told my mother about the showers.

Sitting in Monsignor Urell's office, I briefly told him what I remembered. As I told him, I started to feel emotionally shaken. I then remembered Father Coughlin rubbing my buttocks very intimately with his soapy hand. The meeting was brief - I was very disturbed (shaking, jumpy and dizzy) so I left quickly. Driving away I ended up screaming and crying for about half an hour. This was the first time I had ever connected any emotion with a memory of Father Coughlin. However, I was still

