

May 13, 1994

Mark Roseman
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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

confused and very unclear what was happening to me and why I was having this type of reaction.

Shortly thereafter, I returned to Michigan. Initially, I returned into counseling with Dr. Anderson. I described my body memories to him, and displayed some in his office. He referred me to Barbara Valasis, Director of the Primal Integration Institute of Michigan. I have been in Primal Therapy since March, 1993. The Primal Institute has offered me a safe place with trained experienced therapist to explore and let go of the repressed emotions, feelings and body memories I was very in touch with. While releasing these feelings on yet a deeper level, I was for a first time relating to the therapists and those around me in my life that perhaps I had been sexually abused by a Father Coughlin. However, since I had no recollection, only these deep feelings of grief, screaming and body memories coming out, I was not sure. I did not fully understand what I was experiencing. At this point, I simply allowed myself the freedom to let go of the feelings and know that they would bring me to a deeper truth eventually.

My "body memory/emotional outbursts experience has included *but is not limited to* - choking sensations in the mouth, gagging sensations and difficulty in breathing, crying, moaning, screaming in terror, talking, screaming key words over and over, shaking in terror, repeatedly reliving (through body movements) forced oral sex and forced anal penetration and reliving the grief, terror and fear associated with it. Most recently, a shift has taken place. My depression is lifting as I move into primarily rage. My rage brings strength, clarity and with it, most importantly, *specific memories of what had happened to me*. I have processed through the feelings of fear, terror, grief and am now pushing forward through rage at the *specifics of my abuse*. I also suffer from anxiety attacks characterized by shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, a panicked feeling and a need to sit still. I have come to understand within myself these panic attacks are because, within me, I know I am remembering. Additionally, I fear the power of my own rage. The further I press on with my specific rage, the less I experience anxiety.

In this letter to you I can, for the first time, speak with certainty and clarity that I have been sexually abused by Richard Coughlin and the aforementioned experiences were a direct result of such abuse. Even though the specificity of the abuse is not complete in terms of when and where, enough of my emotions and mental memories have integrated enough. Additionally, the impressions, memories of locations and

feelings along with these locations are coming back rapidly. These "pre memories" or impressions do not grow weaker or less clear as I continue in my rage. They are, in fact, growing in clarity and number.

Specific memories that have come back that I can talk about:

* I remember wanting to kill myself after a choir sponsored pool party. I have impressions of sex with several boys present at this party, and I remember the boys parents were not at home. I went into our family bathroom, found razor blades and sat on the side of the bathtub. I had heard other choir members talk about suicide done by cutting one's wrists and sitting in warm water (Side note here, I feel compelled to contact other choir members who may have been present at this occurrence. Please advise if this is appropriate.)

* I remember Richard Coughlin taking me on two occasions for a weekend in San Diego. We stay at the Hanai Laui hotel on hotel circle. I remember father bathing me in the shower, washing my hair, lathering me all over, rubbing me all over including the anus region and staring at my penis. Some images of this incident were my first memories to come back. This same series of events happened in Venice, Italy.

* I recently remembered him pulling down my pants and taking off my underwear while not in the bathroom. This happened in the San Diego hotel room.

I have many other impressions that I am journalizing. However, unless you advise otherwise. I feel it best to discuss only clear memories.

With this understanding that, yes, I have been sexually abused, comes a converging sense of self understanding and inner resolution regarding aspects of my self that have been dysfunctional and troubling. However, it must be noted that I will be healing from and resolving from within the effects of this abuse, at some level, for the rest of my life.

Some of the effects of this abuse have been:

1. Most significantly, my adult life is one characterized by an inability to *successfully carry on an intimate relationship*. The longest relationship I held, until this past

year, was four weeks. I have been psychological incapable of equating sex and intimacy.

2. Compulsive/addictive sexual behavior. I would go from an extreme of a constant need to quick, anonymous sex to the other extreme of not being able to handle it if someone touched me.
3. Lack of self esteem.
4. Excessive passivity, especially toward male authority.
5. Confusion and inner conflict regarding my sexual identity.
6. Lack in my ability to trust others and excessive personal rigidity.
7. Self-violating interpersonal habits and lack of clarity with respect to personal boundaries
8. Self-destructive behavior including; suicide thoughts, self inflicted pain imposed upon myself under the guise of religious experience and "God", believing and acting upon the belief that I am meant to suffer, believing that suffering is the only way to please God or to gain spiritual understanding.
9. Excessive shame including my body, sexual habits and sexuality in general.
10. Excessive guilt, manifesting itself in paranoid behavior.
11. Depression.
12. Rage.
13. Anxiety attacks.

As I said in the beginning of this letter, I am just now putting the pieces of my abuse together. *It has only been in the last three months where I have been able to say with assurance "yes, I have been sexually molested by Richard Coughlin."* I can no longer deny or avoid this fact. It is simply a matter of time before the specific memories of the traumas I have been re-experiencing return. As I put the pieces together, my rage grows. As my rage grows, my strengths returns.. The stronger I become, the more capable I am to remember. The more I remember, the more I understand about myself. This is the cycle I am currently in.

I now feel a strong, inner push for resolution and restitution. Hence, I have contacted you for legal advice. I feel clear and strong enough to press a lawsuit against Richard Coughlin and the church itself. Aside from the obvious responsibility and guilt that Richard Coughlin has with respect violating me in such a repugnant and violent manner, I believe the Church is responsible for the actions of its Priests. I am forced to ask ...was he watched over by any superiors? How was he able to be fully supported

by the institution of the church and get away with molesting you children at the same time? Did he have supervisors mentioning him or guiding his life? His spiritual life? His psychological life? Do they screen people before trusting them with the resources and position of esteem that the church provides these priests? These are just some of the questions I now seek answers to.

The lawsuit is important because I feel it is important to 1) continue to reclaim back and excersize my sense of power by confronting and resolving this issue in a public forum 2) forcing the Church to act in a social and ethical manner by making it assume responsibility for the actions of its priest and nuns and, hence, compensate me for suffering imposed by the actions of it priests Richard Coughlin and 3) force the church to stop this behavior among its priests and nuns 4) make these issues public to continue to raise public awareness and conciseness.

My rage just grows, Mark. I hope you can help me. I have spoken with Patrick several times regarding his case, and he seems pleased with your work.

As a settlement I demand:

- 1) A meeting/confrontation with Richard Coughlin.
- 2) Monetary reimbursement for the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual trauma of the ordeal.

Additionally, a victory in court will satisfy my need for the Church to assume and admit responsibility for what has happened to me.

This is the text of my initial complaint. I hope this is enough for you to use in your initial analysis of my case. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Zapala". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "E" at the beginning.

Eric Zapala

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