

CONFIDENTIAL

May 16, 1995

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My name is [REDACTED] and I have been a member of the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] when I entered the [REDACTED]. I am writing this statement in order to file a complaint of sexual harrasment against Fr. Michael Pecharich of the Diocese of Orange. I have discussed my experiences relating to Fr. Pecharich in therapy before, but I never thought of actually doing anything about what happened to me. I met with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for my annual colloquy last December, and I told him about the experiences I had with Fr. Pecharich. I have come to realize that Fr. Pecharich acted inappropriately with me and that I was sexually harrasmed by him. In this statement, I will explain to the best of my recollection what happened.

Fr. Pecharich was an associate pastor in my family's parish at San Antonio de Padua Catholic Church in Anaheim Hills, California. I confess that I am not entirely sure how long our "counseling" relationship lasted, but I think it was a period of time during the years 1981-1982. I was roughly fifteen or sixteen years old. I remember that I was at the parish rectory one day. I think I was doing some yard work for the pastor. He approached me and told me that he really wanted to see me. He seemed to indicate that I could use some "counseling." I do not recall asking for a counseling relationship with him, but I did not have a lot of self-confidence and I figured he knew what was best. He had a way of looking intensely into my eyes, presumably as a way of intimidating me, and I could feel the pressure of his gaze. I suppose it was meant to persuade me to begin to see him formally.

Apparently Fr. Pecharich had talked to my parents about the possibility of seeing me and they were open to the idea. I began to visit him in his office without being totally sure why, but he seemed to feel it was an important thing to do. Usually, when I first arrived at his office and after he had shut the door, he would embrace me very tightly for what seemed like a long period of time, but was probably about five minutes. He would also move his hands along my back and he would kiss me on the cheek. He did not ask me if I wanted to be hugged or kissed. This happened because he wanted it to happen, and I would end up feeling very confused. I was not comfortable with this ritual at all, but I was in a very vulnerable and powerless position, and again, I presumed that he knew best.

During our "sessions," we would basically talk about what I was feeling and what was happening in my life. Our meetings would usually last about an hour, but I'm not sure how often we met. I think he believed that I needed to be

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freer emotionally. Although this was probably true, I must emphasize that after reflecting on this experience, what I have concluded is that this relationship did not empower me, did not help me, and did not make me more free. Rather, whether he was conscious of it or not, the relationship between him and me and what happened clearly existed for the satisfaction of his ego and his emotional needs.

I eventually ended my relationship with Fr. Pecharich. I guess I realized that I didn't want to meet with him anymore. He told me he "wanted to be my friend" but ultimately he didn't force me to continue to see him. After that, when I'd see him, he would shake my hand and give me that intense, high-pressure gaze, as if he was trying to overpower me psychologically. Just before ending this relationship, without knowing it, my parents had seen him with a group of teenagers at a church function. I don't know what he was doing, but my father said to my mother that he didn't want Fr. Pecharich alone with any of his children. It was shortly after that, without knowing what my father had said, that I ended this "counseling" relationship.

Why do I file this complaint now? I am not necessarily asking that Fr. Pecharich be removed from ministry, although if the diocese feels it is necessary they should do it. This is not a personal vendetta against Fr. Pecharich. I am only submitting this statement after careful discernment and reflection. I feel that he used his authority as a priest to take advantage of me and that he used me. It is true that he did not molest me, but his behavior with me was, to say the least, inappropriate. He crossed sexual boundaries, and that was wrong. I do this primarily both for the awareness of the diocese and for Fr. Pecharich's own awareness and growth, so that in the future, he will not act with others the way he acted with me.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the author.

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