

PSYCHO/SOCIAL HISTORY

Reverend Joseph D. Richards

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Presenting Problem:

Father Joseph Richards is a 30-year-old white, male, diocesan priest, from the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota. He initiated this evaluation upon the advice of his outpatient therapist, to whom he had gone for help in dealing with his repressed memories of sexual abuse. In response to the question, "why are you here?" he replied, "I was sexually abused by my great-uncle who died in 1982." He reports that he had apparently repressed his memory of the incidents until after his uncle's death.

Joseph went on to say that he believes he has suffered periodic episodes of depression throughout his life, but that it has become more intense in the last two to three years. He also experienced the death of his father in February 1992. In addition, he feels that he has problems with sexual compulsivity and considers himself to be "sexually addicted."

Developmental/Family History:

Joseph was born in Valley City, North Dakota on February 17, 1963. He lived there for the first five years of his life, when the family moved to Moorehead, Minnesota. He was the fifth born of seven children. His birth was apparently normal and he reached all developmental milestones at age-appropriate levels.

His father was a civil engineer and his mother was a homemaker, who later went to work as a school bus driver. He characterized his father as domineering, strict, warm, understanding, and affectionate. He described his mother, to whom he was closest, as warm, understanding, perfect, and affectionate. He reported that his parents' relationship was close and loving, although he recalls his father "hollering" at times and that he did feel a certain fear of him. Both parents shared in disciplining the children, but he never recalls being physically punished. They were usually sent to their rooms. As a child, Joseph was characteristically shy, awkward, and somewhat of a loner. He reports that he has a poor memory for his childhood. As far as his role in the family goes, he described himself as somewhere between "a lost child and a people pleaser." He stated that his mother told him that his father had some problems with drinking when he was a very small child. Joseph has no memory of this, however, and claims that he only remembers his father as a social drinker when he was growing up.

He attended public schools for both grade school and high school, although the family was Catholic. He described himself as an

average student but that he had difficulty with memory and comprehension. He stated that he was pretty much of a loner in school and was shy with a negative self-concept. He stated that he had acne, was thin and tall, and always felt that if people got to know him, they would reject him. His best friends during school were two girls, although he never dated and had no sexual experiences. He stated that all through high school he wanted to get married and have seven children. Halfway through his freshman year of college, he decided to "try the seminary." He went on to say that he almost quit the priesthood twice because of his desire to get married. He was ordained approximately three years ago and is currently in his second assignment. He experienced some difficulties in his first assignment, working with the pastor, who is a friend. He said that after they stopped working together, their friendship resumed. He is currently the pastor of three small parishes and says that he is satisfied with his assignment.

Psycho/Sexual History:

As stated previously, Joseph began to remember being abused sexually by his great-uncle, shortly after his death. He believes he was 12 or 13 years old at the time the abuse occurred. It began after his great-uncle moved in with the family after his wife had died. He was approximately 83 years old at that time. Joseph recalled that he was always his uncle's favorite nephew and would get special attention from him. When he began to remember, he brought it up with his spiritual director, who tried to evade the issue. He eventually told his parents who were quite supportive. He believes that his father felt guilty for asking the uncle to move in with them. To the best of his knowledge, no other children in the family were abused by this man, although Joseph is concerned about his two younger brothers. He reports that he has also had flashbacks regarding a trap door and a house, next to the house he lived in prior to the age of five. He does not know what it means but his mother verified that the house and trap door existed, and said that he was only in that house one time to her knowledge.

Joseph said that he considers himself to be bisexual at this time, although he has never had sexual relations. He admits to feeling somewhat confused regarding his sexuality. He feels that his masturbation, need for pornography, and sexual fantasizing would become out of control whenever he would go out of town. When he began to have fantasies about abusing a child and felt an attraction toward children, he decided to voluntarily seek help.

Alcohol/Drug History:

Joseph denies any history of alcohol/drug abuse. As mentioned previously, his father may have abused alcohol at one point in his

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life. His mother drank rarely. One paternal uncle is alcoholic.

Other:

_____ since the death of their father. Joseph recalls feeling suicidal as a teenager and went far enough to make a plan.

Joseph was apparently underweight most of his childhood, and is now approximately 25 pounds overweight. He feels that he uses food as a coping mechanism to deal with stress and occasionally "binge eats." He denies a history of purging, using laxatives, diuretics, diet pills, etc.

There is no legal history.

There is no military history.

Impressions:

Joseph appears to be experiencing stress and depression stemming from his painful memories of childhood sexual abuse, the illness and death of his father, and the death of a close uncle. His sexual preoccupation also appears to be interfering with his daily life and may be bordering on compulsive. His fantasies regarding children, while not uncommon for sexual abuse victims, are disturbing and should be treated as a cry for help. He would probably benefit from an intensive inpatient program.

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