

STATE OF MINNESOTA

DISTRICT COURT

COUNTY OF RAMSEY

SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

COURT FILE NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

PROSECUTOR FILE NO.: 2097052

State of Minnesota,

Plaintiff,

v.

Christopher Thomas Wenthe  
(DOB: 11/04/1964)  
401 River St.  
Delano, MN 55328,

**FELONY  
CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

Summons  Warrant

Order of Detention

Amended

Certified Juvenile

EJJ

Defendant.

The Complainant, being duly sworn, makes complaint to the above-named Court and states that there is probable cause to believe that the Defendant committed the following offense(s):

**COUNT 1**

On or about the 1st day of November, 2003 to the 28th day of February, 2005, in Ramsey County, Minnesota, the defendant, **CHRISTOPHER THOMAS WENTHE**, did unlawfully engage in sexual penetration with another person, and the actor is a member of the clergy, the complainant is not married to the actor, and the sexual penetration occurred during a period of time in which the complainant was meeting on an ongoing basis with the actor to seek or receive religious or spiritual advice, aid, or comfort in private.

Said acts constituting the offense of **Criminal Sexual Conduct in the Third Degree** in violation of MN Statute: §609.344.1(l)(ii); 609.344.2

Maximum Sentence: 15 years or \$30,000 fine, or both.

## STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE

The Complainant states that the following facts establish probable cause:

Your complainant is an investigator with the St. Paul Police Department and bases this complaint on a review of reports and upon his own investigation.

On April 15, 2010, Officer Robert Winsor of the St. Paul Police Department responded to a dispatch to St. Paul Police Headquarters located at 367 Grove Street in St. Paul, Minnesota. Winsor met with an adult female who identified herself as A.D.F., dob: 12/12/81. She came in to report criminal sexual conduct by a man identified as **CHRISTOPHER THOMAS WENTHE, DOB: 11/04/64**. She stated that the sexual abuse occurred during a time period from November 1, 2003 through February 28, 2005. She clarified that the defendant is a Catholic priest and at the time of the abuse, he was working as such at Nativity Church, located at 1900 Wellesley Avenue in St. Paul, Ramsey County, Minnesota. She reported that she converted to Catholicism in 2003 and attended Nativity Church during that time. She reported that she had been sexually abused as a young child and that she suffered from an eating disorder. She provided letters to the Archdiocese of St. Paul which detailed the nature of the sexual abuse.

This investigator conducted a detailed follow-up interview with A.D.F. in August of 2010. She reported that she came to the Catholic faith as an adult and subsequent to earning a Bachelor's degree in Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas. She graduated from a course known as the Right of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) at Nativity Church.

While she was receiving education in the RCIA course, she met the defendant. He was a speaker in the course and provided lecture for her curriculum. She also met him in person at a picnic honoring the graduates of the RCIA course which was held at her RCIA sponsor's home.

A.D.F. stated that she had been in recovery after suffering from bulimia. She also disclosed that she had been sexually abused as a child and had not sought treatment or counseling for that until she was an adult. She stated that her spiritual advisor encouraged her to seek professional counseling for the child abuse and to seek out a regular confessor within the Catholic Church. By regular confessor, she meant a priest with whom she could establish an ongoing relationship and engage in spiritual comfort, guidance and consolation. She suggested the defendant and her spiritual advisor thought he would be a good selection. He agreed to become her regular confessor.

She stated that she received confession from the defendant conservatively four times. On occasion, the defendant took confession from her in the private sitting room, adjacent to his bedroom, in the church rectory. The other three rites of confession took place in the church confessional.

Shortly after her introduction into the church, she became a sponsor for others to enter the catholic faith through RCIA. The defendant spoke to this group of persons and she would be in attendance at the lectures. She continued to learn from him, even though she was a graduate of the program. She stated that he affirmed her faith in God as he spoke. She stated, "I thought I was talking to God." She reported that he would spend extra time with her and the person that she was sponsoring after class, discussing the lessons and providing his insight.

In a letter dated October 2, 2006, written to a high ranking member of the St. Paul Archdiocese, A.D.F. wrote of the defendant taking her first confession in his private quarters:

I didn't plan on this, but upon arriving at the rectory, he asked if it would be okay. Of course I was uncomfortable; we were sitting on a small couch in a room connected to his bedroom, but I did not feel I was in any position to object. As for the confession itself, Fr. Wenthe's questioning of me to determine culpability resulted in my sharing rather personal details of my past. In short, I disclosed that I had been sexually abused as a child. Seeing as I had not undergone any formal therapy for the abuse, I was unwilling to share details with him. At the time of this confession, I did not understand the severity of the affects of the abuse, particularly my tendency to disassociate when confronted with sexual advances....I described the position in which I dissociate in that confession. I also described the way I sought to hide any fear or pain I was experiencing from the other person, terrified of making the other uncomfortable. Ultimately, I revealed my dread of sexual intimacy and inability to express this fear, particular in the midst of a sexual encounter.

During the interview with this investigator, A.D.F. stated that she invited the defendant over to her apartment for dinner on his birthday. She stated, "That's what you do with priests, you have them over for dinner." She stated as the evening wore on, conversation turned to her past and he began to inquire about her history of sexual abuse and sexual experiences, the very things for which she initially sought his counsel. She reported that she trusted the defendant and she freely spoke of these events. On that night, he stroked the back of her hair. She said that she felt confused because he touched her in that way.

She reported that the first sexual contact with the defendant occurred in his apartment at the rectory at Nativity Church. This contact occurred in early November of 2003. The defendant knew that on that day, she had gone to her first counseling session intended to deal with her eating disorder and sexual abuse as a child. The defendant invited her to the rectory and to his apartment that evening. She believed it was to console her after the difficult counseling appointment. At that time the defendant held her in an embrace and spoke kindly to her. In the October 2, 2006 letter, she wrote:

Immediately, the situation became inappropriate. He asked me to scratch his legs, something I knew he used to ask his girlfriend to do. At one point, with no gradual or natural progression, he was lying on top of me – the very position I had described to him that leads to my dissociation. I remember little of the next hour, until he asked me to perform oral sex. I remember pleading with him that we should stop, that degree of sin mattered and we should stop. He became incredibly frustrated with me. He made me feel like I had done this to him and that I was obligated to finish the job. After I complied, he turned from me, trembling and crying, repeating over and over that we were going to Hell and his priesthood was over; that God could never forgive this, then he apologized, said it wasn't my fault, but that I had to go.

She described a pattern of behavior that would result in the two of them having sexual contact approximately every two weeks. She described the pattern as a period of remorse and then re-engagement. During the re-engagement, the defendant would express his weakness and sexual addiction and likened it to the bulimia that she suffered from. She recalled that the defendant had told her that he did not think that their relationship would have become sexual if she was not so ill due to her eating disorder and past sexual abuse.

A.D.F. stated that she would attend mass when the defendant would officiate on a regular basis, approximately three times per week. She continued to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion from the defendant. She stated that going to a mass that he officiated restored her faith in him as a priest. She reported that on more than

one occasion, the defendant would get her attention after mass concluded. He invited her to join him in the sacristy, a room for keeping vestments and church furnishings. This is the room where the priests dress in ceremonial garments and gather in preparation for the service. They return there at the end of the service to remove their ceremonial clothing. The sacristy is not accessible to the general public. The sacristy at Nativity Church is attached to the main body of the church and adjacent to the adoration chapel. Once in the sacristy, the defendant took off his ceremonial cloak and led A.D.F. to his apartment at the rectory. A.D.F. would then perform oral sex on the defendant. There were also times when sexual contact occurred in the sacristy after mass concluded.

In her October 2, 2006 letter, A.D.F. wrote:

As the relationship escalated, so did the severity of my eating disorder. I was subconsciously using my eating behaviors as a way to punish myself for what I believed was *my* sin. On two occasions after a sexual encounter, I ended up in the emergency room, vomiting blood. He knew this happened and he knew it was because of him. We discussed it. He would say again and again that *he could not bear that he was doing this to me*, that he was causing me to suffer. Yet he always ended up in the same situation, outside my apartment.

She goes on to write in that same letter:

By the fall of 2004, I had decided that the only way out was to move. Ft. Wenthe kept saying he would do something to stop things, but it never happened. Very early on, he told me he had consulted his spiritual director, who also knew he struggled with a pornography addiction while in seminary, yet knowing of our situation, he failed to return Wenthe's calls. I felt like no one would help. I needed to get away.

In her letter she writes that a friend in Arizona convinced her to enter a treatment program for her eating disorder there. She stated that she returned home to Minnesota to pack her things and tell her family. The last night as she was packing, the defendant called her. He showed up outside her door. She wrote, "It was to be one of the worst of all encounters." She described it as follows:

It started and ended in the shower. When he attempted to perform anal sex, I became so dizzy from the pain that I fell to the ground. I remember pleading, *I'm sorry, I can't*. He sat on the toilet, staring at me lying there, unable to move. He didn't speak but looked at me with disgust. Then he simply got up and left the room with complete disregard for my physical well-being. When I could stand, I went to find him. He was sleeping.

She reported that she later confronted the defendant about that night. She wrote:

"Attempting to explain the behavior, he said, that's the nature of sin: it becomes more disordered as we continue to engage in it. He also said he couldn't help himself as he knew this would be one of the last times."

She stated that she returned to Arizona after that incident and entered into an intensive treatment program. After leaving that treatment, the contact with the defendant began again. She reported that her first relapse after treatment occurred after a conversation with the defendant. She stated that he called and asked if she would talk to him while he masturbated. She reported that she did not comply.

The woman with whom she resided while she sought treatment in Arizona wrote to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in a letter dated August 31, 2005. She reported what she knew about the sexual relationship between the defendant and A.D.F. She wrote as follows:

“While she has lived with us the past few months and while she is in the midst of dealing with some serious health matters, part of the priest’s pattern of behavior is still being repeated; he still calls from his cell phone to hers, at any and all hours of the day or night, and he calls repeatedly late into the night – I know this as she often shows me his name on her caller ID when the calls are coming. She works to resist answering the calls and she has begged him not to call...but there are times when she is at such a low point herself that she gives in and answers...These calls have sometimes had a devastating emotional and physical affect on her, which I have observed directly, and which I understand to be seriously compromising her struggle with a very advanced eating disorder.”

She continued:

“The young woman reports that for a while, Fr. Wenthe had been trying to persuade her to participate verbally while he performs certain acts while he is on the phone with her. She has refused, until finally, on one occasion a few weeks ago, she remained on the phone mute, while he masturbated, and she refused to participate in the way he requested.

In her letter of October 2, 2006, A.D.F. reports that she contacted the defendant while she was working on the trauma in therapy because she had some unsettling questions to ask him. She stated that at this time, he was half way through a treatment program that the church asked him to attend. She reported that when he discussed his treatment, he simply said he was doing whatever the church wanted, to get this over with.

In August of 2010, this investigator interviewed the defendant at St. Paul Police Headquarters after first advising him of his Miranda rights. His attorney was present during the interview. The defendant agreed to provide a statement. During the interview, the defendant acknowledged that he met A.D.F. in July of 2003 when she was converting to the Catholic faith through the Right of Christian Initiation. He acknowledged that she later approached him and asked him to become her regular confessor. He acknowledged that he took her confession on the first occasion in his personal quarters in the rectory. He acknowledged that in mid-November of 2003, he had his first sexual encounter with A.D.F. He stated that she performed oral sex on him. He acknowledged that the sexual contact continued for several months and with regularity. He acknowledged that in December of 2004, A.D.F. went out west to receive treatment for an eating disorder. At that time, the Archdiocese confronted him about his inappropriate relationship with her. He stated that he was sent for treatment for a “generalized anxiety disorder.” He completed the treatment and was later reinstated as a member of the clergy of the Catholic Archdiocese. He was appointed to a parish in Stillwater, Minnesota. He was most recently assigned to a parish in Delano, Minnesota.

He described the sexual contact between himself and A.D.F. in the following terms. A.D.F. would perform fellatio on him. He would perform cunnilingus on her. He would insert his penis into A.D.F.’s anus.

He stated that he believed the entire time he was acting as a friend to A.D.F. and not a priest. He stated that he heard her confession only one time and that was at the onset of their relationship before any sexual contact took place.

He also acknowledged that he would have sexual contact with A.D.F. in his personal living quarters, at her residence, and upon her visits to the St. Paul area during her treatment before he was sent to his own treatment.

He also admitted that he had sexual contact with A.D.F. on several occasions in the church rectory at the conclusion of mass when he was officiating. He acknowledged that he knew she was in attendance at the mass, worshipping there, prior to their sexual contact. This investigator asked the defendant how he was able to differentiate himself from his duties as a priest, officiating mass immediately prior to participating in sexual contact in the church rectory with A.D.F. He was not able to provide an explanation to that question.

On January 28, 2010, this investigator again spoke with A.D.F. During this conversation, this investigator asked A.D.F. if she recalled the defendant making a declarative statement to her ending his relationship as a confessor or spiritual counselor to her. A.D.F. said she did not ever recall the defendant making such a statement. She stated that the defendant continued to hear her confessions while the sexual contact was on going. She stated that she knew the defendant to be officiating the Sacrament of Confession at certain times during church. She stated that her need to be absolved of her sins outweighed her reluctance to interact with the defendant in a spiritual manner. She stated that she knew the person taking her confession was the defendant due to his tone of voice, his speaking mannerisms, and his diction, all of which she discerned despite being separated by a screen intended to block the sense of vision.

She went on to describe the overwhelming power she attributed to the defendant. She stated that she had shared so much pain and details related to her eating disorder and sexual abuse as a child with him that it was unthinkable that she could confide in any other priest without having to rehash and relive the past over and over again.

Complainant requests that Defendant, subject to bail or conditions of release, be:  
(1) arrested or that other lawful steps be taken to obtain Defendant's appearance in court; or  
(2) detained, if already in custody, pending further proceedings; and that said Defendant otherwise be dealt with according to law.

**COMPLAINANT'S NAME:**

Joshua Lego

**COMPLAINANT'S SIGNATURE:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Subscribed and sworn to before the undersigned this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

**NAME/TITLE:**

**SIGNATURE:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Being authorized to prosecute the offenses charged, I approve this complaint.

Date: 02/17/2011

**PROSECUTING ATTORNEY'S SIGNATURE:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: Steven R. Pfaffe  
Assistant Ramsey County Attorney  
50 West Kellogg Blvd, #315  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
651-266-3222/jh  
Attorney Registration #169274

**FINDING OF PROBABLE CAUSE**

From the above sworn facts, and any supporting affidavits or supplemental sworn testimony, I, the Issuing Officer, have determined that probable cause exists to support, subject to bail or conditions of release where applicable, Defendant's arrest or other lawful steps be taken to obtain Defendant's appearance in court, or Defendant's detention, if already in custody, pending further proceedings. Defendant is therefore charged with the above-stated offense.

**SUMMONS**

THEREFORE YOU, THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANT, ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to appear on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ before the above-named court at \_\_\_\_\_ to answer this complaint.

IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR in response to this SUMMONS, a WARRANT FOR YOUR ARREST shall be issued.

**WARRANT**

*Execute in MN Only*     *Execute Nationwide*     *Execute in Border States*

To the Sheriff of the above-named county; or other person authorized to execute this warrant: I hereby order, in the name of the State of Minnesota, that the above-named Defendant be apprehended and arrested without delay and brought promptly before the above-named court (if in session), and if not, before a Judge or Judicial Officer of such court without unnecessary delay, and in any event not later than 36 hours after the arrest or as soon as such Judge or Judicial Officer is available to be dealt with according to law.

**ORDER OF DETENTION**

Since the above-named Defendant is already in custody, I hereby order, subject to bail or conditions of release, that the above-named Defendant continue to be detained pending further proceedings.

**Bail: \$15,000.00**

**Conditions of Release: No contact with A.D.F. DOB: 12/12/81; No private counseling sessions with females.**

This complaint, duly subscribed and sworn to, is issued by the undersigned Judicial Officer this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

**JUDICIAL OFFICER:**  
**NAME:**  
**TITLE:**

**SIGNATURE:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sworn testimony has been given before the Judicial Officer by the following witnesses:

<p style="text-align: center;">COUNTY OF RAMSEY STATE OF MINNESOTA</p> <p><b>STATE OF MINNESOTA</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Plaintiff,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">vs.</p> <p><b>CHRISTOPHER THOMAS WENTHE</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Defendant.</p>	<p><i>Clerk's Signature or File Stamp:</i></p>   <p style="text-align: center;"><i>RETURN OF SERVICE</i></p> <p><i>I hereby Certify and Return that I have served a copy of this COMPLAINT - WARRANT upon the Defendant herein named.</i></p> <p>Signature of Authorized Service Agent: _____</p>
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**FINDINGS OF FACT**

Probable cause found that defendant committed the offenses charged.

Ordered defendant's motion to dismiss denied.

Plea of not guilty to all counts entered.

Trial and hearing on all issues set.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
JUDGE OF DISTRICT COURT

**DEFENDANT DATA / CHARGE SHEET – ATTACHMENT A**

<b>DEFENDANT NAME:</b>	<b>CHRISTOPHER THOMAS WENTHE</b>	<b>DOB:</b>	<b>11/04/1964</b>
Defendant alias name(s):		Alias DOB(s):	
Defendant last known address:	401 River St. Delano, MN 55328		
State ID:			
Fingerprint ID:			
FBI ID:			
St. Paul PD ID:			
Offender ID:			

<b>OTHER DEFENDANT / CASE IDENTIFIERS:</b>			
Fingerprinted?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
Handgun permit?	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Issuing Agency:	)
Location of violation:			
<b>IF DRIVING OFFENSE:</b>			
Driver's License	Number:	Issuing State:	
License Plate	Number:	Issuing State:	
Accident Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> No injury/no damage	<input type="checkbox"/> Property Damage	
<i>check all that apply</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Injury	<input type="checkbox"/> Fatality	
Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC):			

**FELONY WARRANT COMPLAINT**

CT NO	OFFENSE DATE	STATUTE TYPE	STATUTE NBR	STATUTE DESCRIPTION	OFFENSE LEVEL	MOC	G O C	AGENCY ORI CN NBR FUNCTION
1	11/01/2003 to 02/28/2005	Charge	609.344.1(i)(ii)	Criminal Sex Cond-3rd Degree-Clergy-Ongoing Meet f/Advice	F	L51A7	N	St. Paul Police Dept. ORI - MN0620900 CN - 10077070 Charging
		Penalty	609.344.2	Criminal Sexual Conduct-3rd Degree-Penalty				