

THE FAMILY OF OUR LADY OF LORETTO

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November 25, 1980

Very Rev. J. R. Keating
Clergy Personnel Board
Archdiocese of Chicago

Dick,

I am writing you as Chairman of the Personnel Board for the clergy and as a friend. I would ask you to put on the agenda of the Board a reconsideration of your policy concerning the appointment of a priest who has either an alcoholic or psychological problem.

Why? I think if I had been told the truth about Vince McCaffrey's problems I might have been able to help him. Instead, when a representative of the Personnel Board called asking me to consider having Vince as an associate, I was told that the reason for his change after only one year at St. Victor's was that he had previously served there as a Seminarian and that his return as a priest had been a mistake. I was told that the Board had advised against his going to St. Victor's, but that Vince had insisted and the Board had gone along. While I didn't really buy this whole story, I took the attitude that everyone has a right to a new beginning, presuming no one would get hurt in the process.

If I had been told that Vince had an alcoholic problem, would I have accepted him? I think I would have, [REDACTED]

I am now faced with a situation which is bad.

I am not a psychologist and we received no training to be such during our days in the Seminary. However, during my period of working in the Matrimonial Tribunal I dealt with several cases involving Schizophrenia and its varying degrees. I am not saying Vince has this illness, but I am saying there is definitely a basic problem. Vince is never on a normal plane. He is either high or depressed. He is always trying to prove himself, yet thinks in his cunningness that he hides this. He is the greatest con artist there is. He is the greatest procrastinator there is. I know these things from observation during the seventeen months he has been here. I have learned them from talking with priests who have known him over the years. (One priest who knew him in the Seminary told me of his "highs," "highs" which would cause him to pass out. Another told me how he was constantly "the con artist" in the Seminary. A priest who was his parish priest while in Grammar School told me of his constant compensation for his small stature, his macho efforts. In staff meeting here he would put people down or keep going back to matters which he did

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not agree with, even after the subject matter being discussed had changed.)

If I had been told of his alcoholism, I would have been more alert to the many mornings he did not get up to offer Mass. (He was very careful not to drink more than an occasional beer in front of me and smoked incessantly which covered his breath. He would have the altar boy take the wine remaining in the chalice and pour it down the sacrarium rather than finish it because "he didn't like wine.") He always apologized for missing Mass and gave the excuse he was a "night person." It would have alerted me to the reason for the late hours he kept. (His friends in the parish did not know he had a problem; but I am finding out that the number of parishioners who knew he was frequenting bars in the area until the wee hours was fairly large.) I have learned that while he was at St. Victor's a priest who does alcoholic counseling wanted him to go to Guest House and the Seminary Psychologist talked him out of it. I think the scandal could have been avoided or at least lessened if I had been told the truth.

If I had been told of his other problem, I am sure I would have reacted to my "gut feelings" and we could have avoided the present scandal. I was not alone that something was amiss, but I had no concrete evidence. But how many priests have a young teenager (from St. Victor's) come frequently to stay over night in his room? Oh, the excuses were that he was helping him with his study. In the old rectory, even after we had a guest room, he always stayed in his room. In the new rectory (the old convent) we have a couple of guest rooms, but this made no difference. The night of the episode (a different lad from Cal City), I sensed he had brought someone into the house and slipped him up the back stairs. If I had known I would have been a little less comfortable with his friendship with some of the young kids, zeroing in on certain individuals. I don't think any overt actions took place with youth from this area, but I do think ground work was being laid. I know this is a strong charge and it is only an opinion, but it is my "gut" feeling.

I said above that I am faced with a situation which is bad. The police in Hometown have been very good in keeping the situation quiet. The parents of the boy involved have been good as long as I keep assuring them [REDACTED]. The mother insists that I tell her exactly what is being done about this problem or she will prosecute. I know of at least one parishioner who knew of both his problems since he came here and only recently told me, looking for a denial on part to ease her mind. I think she will keep quiet as she has for seventeen months.

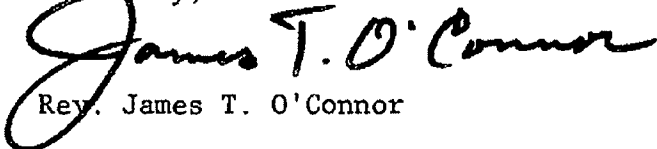
The bad situation is this. No matter what I do I'll be damned. I cannot tell the people, yet if it gets out who's going to catch hell? He was well liked and is keeping in touch with friends and people want to know when he will be coming back; and I will not take him back. This is a small town and I had to tell the people he was sick and that it was alcoholism to stop the speculation. And I am not exaggerating.

Even though I believe a person should be given a second and third chance, I would not take Vince back. Why? Because I do not feel I can trust the Personnel Board policy to level with me [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] That is why I am asking you to reconsider the Board's policy in appointing a man. I will gladly meet with you, any member of the Board or the whole Board to discuss this matter if you wish. When I find his former Pastor, the Vicar of the area and the Personnel Board all know of the problems and no one tells the "receiving Pastor," I think something is wrong.

Please review your policy in this matter.

Sincerely,


Rev. James T. O'Connor

JTO/hs

cc: John Cardinal Cody
Very Rev. John Curran
Rev. Andrew McDonagh
Members of the Board

Priest's file -

~~Conner~~
Angie - file

January 12, 1981



Dear Father McCaffrey,

I am very grateful for your letter of January 6, 1981, and I am delighted to learn that your sojourn [redacted] is proving of such great help to you.

[redacted] I am certain that you will soon be able to return to your fine priestly work. I know the great help that Fathers McDonagh and Simpson have been to you and I shall share your success with them.

Wishing you an abundance of blessings and hoping to see you very soon, I am, dear Father McCaffrey,

Very truly yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Chicago

JPC:ms

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