

PASTORAL CARE EVALUATION
Father Vincent Fitzgerald
November 10, 1992

Father Joseph McNamara, s.P

I asked Vince if he had read the letter from Father Deegan to us regarding his evaluation. Vince felt that the letter was a "putdown." Vince does admit to an incident in Henry, Illinois, when he tore the bottom part of a bathing suit of a girl eight or nine years of age. He said that this did not expose her to him and that the "bathing suit was ragged anyway." He was assured by a psychiatrist that this was done out of curiosity. The only other incidents that Vince felt might have been improper were on one occasion with the boy in northern Minnesota when the boy was taking a shower and asked Vince to bring him a wash cloth. The boy was naked when Vince handed him the wash cloth. At another time in 1966 or 1967 he was asked to take an eleven or twelve-year-old boy on a trip from the children's home in Sisseton, South Dakota. The boy was angry. He held a knife on Vince and threatened to tell others that "I had done wrong to him." Vince consulted an attorney in Bemidji, Minnesota. He asked the attorney for an opinion whether sharing a bed with a boy and also undressing himself in front of the boy to go swimming would be grounds for an accusation of doing something wrong. The lawyer replied in the affirmative. Vince then called Father Figge, the Provincial, to tell him about this. Other than these events, Vince is quite adamant that no other sexual involvement took place. He mentioned, in fact, that there were a number of situations at swimming pools and public baths in which prudence told him to leave. I questioned Vince about using the camper and whether this might not have caused some red flags to be shown by other people. Vince said that he was criticized for this but only because people felt that he was healthy and able to work and should not be traveling around freely in a camper.

Vince has a traditional spirituality based on saying the Office, the liturgy and spiritual reading. He has not had a specific spiritual director for a number of years. When he was near Chicago, he would go to a Franciscan monastery to talk things over with a priest in confession. Vince feels that he does have a good relationship with God and that God is able to bring good out of the evil. He feels that the Oblate community "has underestimated me." Vince feels that he has been quite successful in ministry wherever he went. He is conscious as well that his life has been dogged by the incident in Henry with the young girl and the other accusations that he was aware of.

I asked him how he was feeling and what he would hope would come as a result of the evaluation. He did not respond directly. Vince said that being able to deny the accusations of molestation of the boys in northern Minnesota lifted his spirits. Vince said that when this latter incident would come up, "I never knew what he (Father Deegan) was talking about and what's on that paper did not happen." I asked him why he asked to be removed from California



OMI 000948

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Father Vincent Fitzgerald
Page Two

because of the rumor that Bishop Brom was getting the history of priests working in the Diocese. Vince said that it was because of the girl and the alleged incident with the boys in northern Minnesota. He felt ill-equipped to be able to deny this or respond to it. I tried to point out to him that all of this has had a profound effect upon his life and has caused him great distress and pain. Vince agreed with this but did not know what else he could do about it.

Vince has a way of deflecting questions which are asked of him either by referring to someone else or by appealing to his health needs. I do not doubt his own good will or his desire to be a good priest and religious, but it is extremely difficult for him to face life straight on. He makes excuses for himself saying, "This is the way I am and the people just have to accept me this way." Vince would be a very difficult person to deal with in a program such as ours. He might be more amenable and get more help in an intense outpatient program.

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St. MICHAEL'S COMMUNITY