

~~Confidential~~

19 September 1988

RE: Michael Bik, O.S.B.

I met with Tom Andert and Nathan Libaire for about an hour and a half this afternoon, primarily to discuss Michael Bik's work at the Prep School. I opened the meeting by noting my concern that the schedule which had been discussed for Michael for this school year didn't seem to reflect what was now actually going on. The contract/job description prepared earlier this summer calls for Michael to be in the campus ministry office this semester for about 45 minutes (a regular class period) in the late morning; and for him to teach two classes in the morning hours. However, during a conversation with him recently, I learned that he had divided one of his classes into two smaller classes; that he now lists his campus ministry/meetings/presence times as running from 2:00--4:00 each day; and I have seen him fairly regularly in the refectory eating shortly before noon (and obviously not in the campus ministry office). Moreover, he is now attending a calligraphy class in the morning at the Prep School. In other words, the morning schedule (from about 9:30 to noon) has become an 8:00--4:00 schedule, with breaks for noon prayer. This far exceeds what had been discussed this summer with Tom.

I stated that I was (1) bringing this to them as a matter of information and (2) asking for their support (in my perception) of the growing involvement of Michael in the Prep School and the growing absence of Michael from the juniorate program and the monastery.

Tom explained that he had heard that Michael had divided one of his classes into two smaller classes and didn't regard this as a problem in itself (if Michael would be in his office anyway, there did not seem to be any additional time factor if that period became a classroom exercise instead of an office exercise). Both Nathan and Tom expressed surprise, however, at the overall changes in Michael's schedule. They couldn't imagine why Michael would list campus ministry time in the afternoon, since Matthew was already there and since most of the students leave immediately after the school day--to go home or to take part in athletics. Thus, they both felt there was no reason for Michael to be in the Prep School in the afternoon hours. They were unaware of the calligraphy addition until I mentioned it.

What followed was a fairly lengthy discussion about Michael Bik and his relationship to the school and his relationship to the formation program. Some high points:

1) Tom and Nathan both suggested that Michael feels persecuted by and in an adversarial role with the formation team (specifically Rene and Robin). He lives in terror of us. Example: Apparently most of what went on at the Prep retreat weekend was good and fun. As Michael neared Saint John's, however, his mood changed dramatically. He spoke of dreading being back: having to be at office, etc., or the formation team would be on his case immediately, being checked up on.

He supposedly frets about and dreads having to meet with Robin or Rene. (I explained that some three weeks have passed since Rene asked for a meeting with Michael; and, on the other hand, my approach: Michael, we WILL meet either

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today, tomorrow, or the next day. Which is best for you?)

Question: Has Michael had a rough past in his dealings with superiors? Is this something new?

2) Michael, despite his considerable educational background and much experience, apparently has almost no self-confidence in his teaching abilities. He doesn't have a good self-image. He has a personal distrust in his ability to function, work, teach in a professional capacity. Instead of addressing his professional responsibilities (i.e., classroom work), he seems to put all his energy and time into coddling, smothering time, with the kids.

NOTE: Nathan and Tom both were adamant: there is NO sexual problem (Michael's relationship with the kids) involved. There does seem to be an over emotional dependence on the students, however.

Suggestion (from Tom): Michael needs a major self-assertiveness course; a good kick in the rear with the statement: you're alright!

3) What is happening with Michael's weight program? Nathan and Tom were very concerned about whether it was being run professionally, because of their perception that Michael's weight loss was becoming a matter of a competition among the group. Follow up is needed here.

4) Tom's perception: Michael is in the midst of personal disintegration: emotional, affectional, relationship, friendship. He seems unable to cope with things emotionally. He is hurting emotionally and affectively. If Michael's main emotional support is the kids, he is headed for disaster.

In general, there is no future in relationships with kids (they grow up and move on). Does Michael know this? Is he investing all his time and energy with the kids?

(Though it may have been inappropriate for me to reveal this, I did feel I had to share the story of Michael Bik/a visitor to Saint John's this summer: Michael feeling energized by students, and finding the community cold; just the opposite of the visitor's perception of Saint John's.)

5) Tom and Nathan both wondered whether there should be a psychiatric follow up (a discussion with Michael's diet counselor?). (I pointed out the perception that, under Rene, all the formation program is IS psychology.)

6) Formerly, Michael was turned down for a job at Benilde. This does not appear to have any bearing on anything. (The position at Benilde required the ability to teach all levels and grades of high school mathematics. Michael may not have been able to cover this range.)

7) Nathan: Michael seems to be overextended in all peripheral things; he neglects his primary duty: teaching. (Cooking, baking, attending games, etc. are all fine and well, but they should not be Michael's first concern: he should be attending to his job in the classroom.)

8) Tom: Michael seems to be paranoid, fearful about failure and acceptance. Is this a mid-life problem? Assertiveness training seems to be needed.

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Michael's training, school, background is excellent! Does Michael know this? Is Michael preparing for rejection (in chapter) next spring?

9) Nathan and Tom spoke very positively about the contribution Michael could make to the Prep School. They want him to work in the Prep School. But they want a healthy person and worry about his balance.

10) Suggestion from Tom/Nathan: Talk to Michael Bik on the spur of the moment; no warning--he only frets about it when he knows a meeting is coming. He becomes very introspective (and this is hurting him).

11) Is there someone who can talk to Michael to find out what is going on-- someone other than formation people or Prep people? Isaac and Joshua seem to be his friends; perhaps Joshua more than Isaac. Could Timothy Kelly help? He seems to have had a good relationship with Michael during novitiate.

12) This is said in confidence. Michael does not know we talked. Nathan is concerned about their working relationship and would like to remain behind the scenes. It may be useful for Tom and/or Nathan to meet with Rene for a further discussion.

*Robert Pierzina, O.S.B.*