

May 17, 1973

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Most Holy Father,

I, James Robert Porter, would like to humbly petition Your Eminence for a dispensation to and release from the responsibilities of the priesthood including in this the release from the obligation of celibacy. I am presently living at 1751 Gulden Place, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55109. I have lived at this address since September 1, 1972. Immediately preceding this I had lived at 970 Reaney Ave. St. Paul, Minn, from December, 1971 until Sept. 1, 1972. Previous to this after leaving the priestly life in Nov., 1970 I lived with the Schmitz family in Hastings Minn. just a few miles outside St. Paul. The address of Florence and Leo Schmitz is, 9550 Manning Ave. So., Hastings, Minn. I came to live there at their request. They knew of my situation that I was suspended of my priestly duties by Bishop James L. Connolly of the Fall River Diocese, Mass. and for what reasons. However being the good friends they are of mine and both being wonderful Christians, they in Christian charity request that I live with them until I could find my way clear and assist me back to normal living. I accepted their charitable offer only on the condition that I would remain with them only so long as necessary. After becoming adjusted to the fact that I was relieved of my priestly obligations I petitioned Bishop John Cronin of the Fall River Diocese, Mass. for a leave of absence so that I could

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make an honest and rational judgment concerning my future way of life. Bishop Cronin readily granted my request enabling me to determine what course I should follow. I then found employment and in March 1, 1971 I began my new way of life in the employ of the Northwestern State Bank, St. Paul, Minn. I have been in their steady employ until the present for the past two years and three months and intend to continue in this field of banking career with them. I am very happy and content with them and the banking field. It is for this reason that I have lived at three different (addresses) in the past two and one half years. After working at the bank for nine months I decided that it would be better for me to leave the residence of the Schmitz family and find an apartment closer to my place of employment. This would also enable me to make a more able and true decision of what my future course of way of living should be if

I were living alone on my own. The Schmitz family agreed with this decision. I still visit them often so they are always in contact with me. I then moved to 970 Reaney Ave. in St. Paul which is located just two blocks from the bank. I was then able to walk to and from work daily. I lived in a very small apartment and found it suitable for my purpose. However I was very fortunate to have a friend at the bank who informed me in August, 1972 that they knew an elderly couple who wished to rent the upstairs of their duplex to a trustworthy and dependable person. This friend recommended me to them. I met this couple and they were satisfied with me. I moved in there at my present address, 1781 Gulden Place, St. Paul. I live in a beautiful, residential locale only a few minutes from the bank. These, in brief are a few reasons for my

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places of residence. I intent to live at my present address permanently as I am very happy and content with my new home.

I was born on the 2nd day of January, 1935 in East Boston, Massachusetts. My parents are Mr. William J. Porter and Mrs. Elda Florence (Groppi) Porter. Both my parents are Roman Catholics in good standing. I have one older brother, William J. Porter, Jr. who also is a Roman Catholic in good standing. I was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church in early February 1935 at the parish of St. Mary's, Star of the Sea in East Boston, Mass. I attended St. Mary's Star of the Sea elementary Parochial School for eight years (1941-1948). I then attended Boston College High School under the direction of the Society of Jesus for four years (1943-1952). The High School is located in Dorchester, Mass. After graduation I then attended Boston College under the direction of the Society of Jesus for four years, (1952-1956),. I received my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mathematics. Upon graduation from Boston College I entered the Seminary to study for the Diocese of Fall River, Mass.

It was during my final two years at Boston College that I first considered any possible vocation to the priesthood. I am not sure what first prompted this idea or consideration except I was searching my mind trying to determine what I intended to do after I graduated from college. I realized

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that I had to decide my future vocation of life. I was undecided whether I wanted to be a Math. Teacher or go into a business firm etc. A priest friend of mine, Father Paul McCarrick of the Fall River Diocese, who knew me for quite a few years asked me if I ever thought of becoming a priest. This took me by surprise but it actually starting me thinking more seriously. In my own mind I was aware that I was always concerned with the spiritual welfare of people. Fr. Paul was aware of my way of life and my closeness to the Church and my abilities and ambitions to help people. He informed me that I might possibly have a vocation to the priesthood and that I should at least give it some serious thought. In the following year I did give this quite a bit of thought and the idea of priesthood appealed to me more and more. I became more convinced that with my desire to assist people to become closer to God that I should pursue the priestly life. During this time I became less interested in my Math. career. I informed Fr. Paul McCarrick about my feelings and together we agreed to arrange for an interview with Bishop James L. Connolly of the Fall River Diocese. Bishop Connolly was in need of priests. After the interview I decided to enter the Seminary under the direction of Bishop Connolly to determine if I did have a vocation. I informed my parents of my decision and they seemed very pleased and elated with my decision. They did not pressure

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me into any decision. My father was very objective minded in this entire affair. He made it very clear to me that I was under no obligation to accept the priest hood if I thought it was not my vocation. After I entered the Seminary I did notice that my mother was completely convinced in her own mind that this is what I was to be. I knew she would be heart-broken if I ever decided to leave the Seminary. In my own mind I did not want to disappoint her as she was so proud to think that her son was going to be a priest. Myself, I never wanted to admit failure in anything and I truly believe that this helped me to continue seeking the priestly vocation even if I ever doubted that I should continue. I did not want to disappoint my mother and relatives. I am not using this as an excuse but just giving you my mental attitude. I did believe that as I continued my studies for the priesthood that I was doing right and should become a priest. I had my doubts at times but I convinced myself that I should be ordained to the priesthood and could do a good job. However I must admit that I convinced myself of this vocation being unsure now of the lay life after being away from it for four years. I think that I was now seeking security and afraid to

admit that I was unsecure about life if I decided to leave the seminary. I never confided my feelings to anyone as I was always ashamed to have anyone think that I had any weaknesses. This fault hurt me a great deal in my priestly life also, (the inability to confide in anyone less they think less of me.)

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Even in the course of my priestly life I never did confide in any of my friends except when forced to because my failures become known. I was always ashamed of my failure and wanted to correct it but would never take the necessary means to do so by consulting and discussing my feelings with even my closest associates. Again I was ashamed to discuss my faults and inadequacies. Knowing of my faults I became very self-conscious and hardly ever associated with my fellow clergymen .I always sought the companionship of lay people and felt comfortable with them realizing they didn't know of my main problem. I felt more accepted in my own mind by them.

I entered the seminary in 1956. I spent four years at St. Mary's Theological Seminary, Poland Park, Baltimore, Md., taught by the Fathers of St. Sulpice. I studied for the Diocese of Fall River, Mass. I was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on April, 2, 1960 by Bishop James L. Connolly D.D., in the Cathedral at Fall River, Mass. I was first assigned to St. Mary's Parish No. Attleboro, Mass. I remained there for about 3 ½ years, until it became necessary for the Bishop to transfer me because of my failure to live up to my priestly responsibilities. It became known and reported to Bishop Connolly that I had become homosexually involved with some of the youth of the parish. This possibly came about due to the fact that I always associated with the youth of the parish. I was always very athletically inclined and therefore directed all the sports programs of the parish. I realized that I was somewhat of an ideal of the children and this was very comforting to me. Hence I always sought to be in their presence as it made me feel wanted and

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needed. Bishop Connolly decided to send me home to my family for a short while until the scandal of this affair died down. My friends and relatives at home thought that I was at home for a needed rest due to overwork and exhaustion. A short time late Bishop Connolly gave me

another chance and assigned me to Sacred Heart Parish in Fall River. I can't recollect much about my stay there except that after a short time I again fell into the same situation that plagued me in No. Attleboro. The reason for my poor recollection is that I was sent to a hospital where I was given Shock Treatments. Dr. Norris Flanagan, a recognized Psychiatrist committed me to his own private hospital in Wellesley, Mass. The name of the hospital is the Wiswall Hospital where I was treated for about six to nine months. I never really knew I was there until my time of release when I was entrusted to the care of my parents. I remained at their home for about six months as an out-patient of Dr. Flanagan. I had weekly consultation with him at his hospital. When he thought I was ready to be given another chance he informed Bishop Connolly. The bishop then assigned me to St. James Parish in New Bedford, Mass. I remained there for about one year but again I ran into the same difficulty. Again I was reported to the Bishop for mal-conduct. He called me in and decided to suspend me. I came home once again to live with my parents. I never wanted to discuss my situation with any one even the clergy. I was too self conscious and ashamed. I

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never wanted to discuss or talk with anyone about the past years or acquaintances because of my lapse of recollection due to my Shock Treatments. I didn't want anyone to know that I had them. Hence I was always very nervous and jumpy and never at ease. I was afraid to admit to myself or anyone else that I was not worthy of the priesthood yet unwilling to outwardly admit defeat. Bishop Connolly had suggested laicization to me as a solution but I just wouldn't accept that. I was too proud. I really think I was afraid to face reality and the fact that I would have to put myself out to seek a new way of life. I felt unsecure and not prepared to face the lay life after these years in the priesthood. I was now using the priesthood as a crutch and shield to protect me from harm. My mind was a jumble as I fully realized that I had brought great spiritual harm to many good Christians, much disgrace to the priesthood and the Church and mostly great spiritual harm to myself. Yet I refused to listen to any advice that even suggested that I seek laicization.

While living at home after this last New Bedford affair, Mousignor Sexton of St. Patrick's Parish, Stoneham Mass. where my parents live decided to try to help me get back on my feet again by letting me celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in his parish and assist on Sundays. However during this time I again fell and the incidents were reported to Mousignor

Sexton with the demand that something be done about it. He had me confer with one of his assistant priests, Fr. Paul Shanley. Fr. Paul insisted that I seek the aid and assistance of the Servants of the Paraclete, at Via

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went to Via Coeli. I was greeted there by Father William Swanson, the Superior of the Monastery. I consulted with him and on his advice I arranged, as in their policy, to have a complete physical exam. I took the exam from a doctor in Albuquerque and the results after extensive tests were that I was in excellent health. I then made arrangements to meet with an approved and recognized psychiatrist. I then was placed under his guidance and care for a period of at least six months. The psychiatrist was Dr. John McCarthy, located at the Winrock Medical Plaza, Suite 372, Albuquerque, N. Mex. He then informed me the superior at Vin Coeli that I should be given weekend assignments to try and get me back on my way. This all took place in 1967-1968. As I appeared to be doing well they decided to let me have more assignments, more often and for longer periods of time. I was then offered by Bishop Green of Las Vegas, Nevada to come to his Diocese and practice again. I was assigned to St. Christopher's Parish in Las Vegas. In a short time I ran into the same difficulties as before. I associated with the youth and in a very short time fell again. I conferred with another recognized psychiatrist, Dr. Robert Buckley, 2020 W. Charleston, Las Vegas, Nevada. He is a Fine Catholic and after discussing my problem suggested that I should seek laicization. He was convinced that the priesthood was detrimental to my condition and actually making it too easy for me to get myself into difficulty. I did not want to admit this even to myself so I returned to Vin Coeli. Fr. John Feit, ssn. was now the superior. After staying there awhile I was then assigned as a chaplain at St. Ann's Hospital in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. I assisted there and also at the parish

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of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Here again in a very short time I fell again. The only problem was that the pastor did not report this to Via Coeli but gave them the excuse that I was not needed there any longer as he, the pastor would not be going on vacation and there would be no need of any extra assistance. With this the superior of Via Coeli asked me if I would go to Nevis, Minnesota to Our Lady of the Snows, another monastery of the Servants of Paraclete to assist

them on weekend work as they desperately needed a priest to help them. I accepted and immediately went there. I spent the summer of 1970 there assisting at various parishes, filling in where they needed a priest. As the summer was coming to a close Bishop Glenn of the Diocese of Crookston, Minn. requested that I stay in Minnesota and assist him in one of his parishes as an assistant priest. I accepted and he assigned me to St. Philip's Parish in Bemidji, Minn. I remained there for one year before it became known that I again was having the same problem. I was having this problem but it was not known by any of the authorities until Sept. 1970. I was asked by the pastor to leave until things cooled off and go to the paracletes for help. I then went to St. Michael's House of Studies, 1320 Maple Drive, Sunset Hills, Missouri under the direction of the Servants of the Paraclete. There I consulted with Fr. Fred Bennett, ssn. A recognized psychiatrist and after therapy and tests by him was definitely told that the priesthood was at the root of my problem and that I in no way should be allowed to function in my priestly capacity. I would always use it as a protection and a ----- means to feed my sickness and trouble. He informed Bishop Connolly of this and (the next four words are illegible)

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suspended me from my priestly duties suggesting that I should definitely think about laicization. It was then that I went to live with the Schmitz family in Hastings Minn. at their request. I forgot to mention also that I did in this period of difficulty fail also at Houston Texas as the priest of the Immaculate Conception.

When I first moved in with the Schmitz family I thought it best to just take it easy for about a month or two before doing anything so that I could just rest and try to relax. In January, 1971 I decided to seek employment now that I rested and mentally relaxed and able to make responsible decisions. I now realized that I must face reality and whether I liked it or not I had to adjust to the situation. Believe me I think this was a blessing in disguise because from that moment on I have been doing the best I have ever done since my Ordination to the Priesthood. I no longer had any one to shield or protect me and I knew it. I then wrote to Bishop Cronin in Fall River seeking permission for a leave of absence to investigate the lay life and live as a layman so I could determine what future course I would follow. He graciously granted my request with his blessings.

After searching for employment for over one month I found what I thought could be a very suitable position for me. I applied for a position at the Northwestern State Bank in St. Paul, Minn. In the interview I told them I was a Roman Catholic Priest who had decided and with the Church's Blessings to seek a different way of life. I gave them the reasons that I give everyone else that I was not happy in the priestly life feeling that I was not suited to it totally as I should

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And that this was a hindrance to my performing my priestly duties the way they be performed. When I explained this they (?) with my (?) and reasons and also decided to hire me because of my background both as a priest and (?). They think that this is just wonderful and understanding of the Church to let me live as a layman to be able to honestly evaluate the course of life I should follow. They think it is admirable that I would admit to the Church and myself that I felt I was not adequately performing my priestly duties and seeking a way of life that was my true vocation. Therefore I must impress on you that everyone I know at the bank and the community thinks and assures me that my living as a layman with the Church's Blessing in order to honestly determine my future is a wonderful and admirable thing. They are all very happy for me. They think that a person should be given the opportunity to make an honest decision in such matters if he feels unhappy and not truly suited to the priesthood. They say it is far better to be happy and content as a layman than to be unhappy and possibly a poor priest. So as far as anyone in this area is concerned, they are all convinced and believe that I am living a lay life with the Church's approval in order to honestly determine what is best for my future way of life. They would find it inconceivable and unexplainable if upon request by me to be laicized why the Church would not grant it especially since the Church has granted me a leave to determine what way of life is suitable and good for my welfare.

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I have informed the proper authorities at this bank of my intention to remain in the banking field and that I intend continue improving my banking career. I informed that I am applying for my release from all priestly responsibilities including celibacy in order that they may now evaluate my two years plus with them. I did this mainly because they wanted to know my intentions as I am in a position now to move up in the banking field due to the success I have

had with them. I now have a chance to advance and since I am now convinced that this is my vocation I wish to take advantage of these opportunities as they present themselves. All are very pleased at my decision and as I stated before see nothing wrong in being able to make such a decision. I am very happy with my new way of life mainly because I like very much what I am doing but more important because I have gained back my confidence and self-respect. Ever since I was force to admit to myself that I was using the priesthood as a protection and as a means to foster my sickness I began to face reality. In the past two and one half years I have not fallen to my previous temptations even though the inclinations are always – there. I realize that I in no way as a layman can succumb to them without serious consequences. Also I do not have the same opportunities easily accessible to be around the youth most of the time and this is a great help to me to avoid the situations. My entire habits have gone through a very beneficial adjustment. I now associate with people my own age either from work or the community. I am able without fear of leaving duties unattended go to events (social, athletic, educational etc.) at will.

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I have now established myself in St. Paul both at work and with all my acquaintances as a layman. I am a member of the community in good standing and known to all as a banker who is single, and a Roman Catholic in good standing. I attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass each Sunday and receive Holy Communion regularly. In everyone's eyes I am in union with the Holy See.

I have done very well in the field of banking and am very happy and content in this new endeavor and way of life. I have a respectable position and if everything continues to go as it has I should be getting a promotion in the near future. I have had three promotions in the past two years. At present I am a lending officer in the Installment Loan Department. I am also responsible for the collection of delinquent loans in our Credit Department. Also part of my duties includes seeing daily that our Loan Department is in perfect balance with the General Control Ledgers of the Bank. Prior to this I was a Teller, had charge of all the coin in the bank as a teller. I also was in the bookkeeping department of the bank. Also I was in charge of the new type of Free Checking Accounts known as Ready Reserve or Checking Plus. I was appointed by the authorities of the bank as the Consul for the American Institute of Banking in the St. Paul

area. I am responsible then for all the educational, sport and recreational activities sponsored by the American Institution of Banking. I have been informed that they wish that I (next two lines are illegible)

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(first three lines are illegible) ...to further my career in banking. I have taken three accredited courses: Principles of Bank (?) in which I received a high grade of "A". (?) too: "Money and Banking" in which I received a "B" grade and thirdly I just completed the course of "Analyzing Financial Statements" where I attained a grade of "A". I did exceedingly well in these three courses and intend to take more this coming semester. The bank pays for my educations and encourages my taking advantage of all the courses available. They may even send me to Madison Wisconsin to banking School for more courses sponsored by the Minnesota Banking Association. This past season I was elected by St. Paul Banker's Golf League, consisting of all the banks in the St. Paul Area, as their League's Secretary-Treasurer. In practical terms this means I am in complete charge of the League to insure its successful operation for the 1973 season. I am in charge of the Treasury, Scheduling, handicapping and planning of the tournament at the season's conclusion. I must also plan and arrange the League banquet. After this I will automatically be appointed as League resident for the 1974 season. This of course is just a brief summary of my life and success in the banking field. You can see that I am very successful and very happy in my new state of life with great hopes for the future.

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I believe it is very evident from my description of the past to the present especially the last two and one half years of my life as a layman established in a banking career that my humble request to be laicized is a very logical and reasonable request. As you can see I have given this an enormous amount of thought and consideration. I have been very careful not to act in haste as too much is at stake. I especially took into consideration what I deem to be the most important aspect of my life, that is, my spiritual welfare. No matter what vocation I choose in life it must be in harmony with the betterment of my spiritual life and the affect it will have on all I come into contact with. As a layman leading a normal Christian life and setting a good example I firmly believe that I am bringing greater honor and glory to God and His Church. As a banker I am in a

very respected profession in the community and looked up to. I have gained back myself respect as a man and a human being and this encourages me to continue as such. I take pride now in all that I do and am very happy in this new way of life. As I said earlier I have not run into my previous difficulty of wrong relations with youth of the same sex even though I realize I will always have the inclination present. In the lay life I find out of a necessity that I must cope with the problem or suffer serious consequences. I now not only seek but enjoy the companionship of people my own age of both sexes. I no longer associate with the youth as I am too preoccupied with my profession and state of life. I have made innumerable friends and acquaintances in the banking field and in the community.

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I have also these past two years dated many girls in the effort to determine if I could truly adjust to lay life. I have enjoyed the social relationships of the opposite by taking them dining, dancing, movies etc. I believe this has helped tremendously to overcome my other inclinations. I have not dated any girl seriously until recently in the past couple months. I take this girl out once each week or every other week. Her name is Miss Joanne Swanson, age 26, single and A Roman Catholic in good Standing. She is a very dedicated young lady who teaches retarded adults at this Day Activity Center in St. Paul. I have met her parents and family who live in Hastings, Minn. and they also are Catholics in good standing. She and her family know that I was a priest and have the Church's permission and blessing to be living the life of a layman in order to decide my future vocation. They think like all the rest of my friends and acquaintances that this is wonderful and beneficial. Her parents have no objection to her dating me. Often before going dining and dancing we attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion together. We have a great deal of respect for each other and we leave it that way. I informed her and she agrees that if we decide to get serious and think of marriage in the future we would not consider or attempt this step until first I receive permission from the Holy See. She and all my friends know that I am petitioning for my release and they are all wishing me the very best. She has given me permission to give you her name and to state they she sees no reason why I would not be allowed to become a layman. Everyone of my friends at the

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I can not overstress that the granting of my request to be released from the responsibilities will have no ill effects on any of the Catholic or non-Catholic people in my community. May I stress what I consider very important? Everyone who knows me in the community has come to know me only as a layman, living the lay life with the blessing of the Church. They all think this is wonderful and proper. They expect that whenever I make a final decision either to re-enter the priestly life or to remain a layman that the Church will grant my request without hesitation. I am convinced that they would be scandalized or horrified if the Church refused my request for release. I think it could cause harm and possible inquiry why I could not be released. They would possibly suspect something else was wrong with my reason for living as a layman and it could possibly cast suspicion on me. I am seeking this release as I stated before because I firmly believe this is the solution for me to be able to lead a meaningful life in the grace of God and Holy Mother the Church. I have a great love and respect for the Church and want to remain faithful to God in His Grace and I believe I can best assure this result by living the lay life.

I therefore ask to be dispensed from the obligations of the priestly state, including that of celibacy. I furthermore promise to cooperate as fully as possible in all the conditions expressed in the dispensation.

Yours in Christ,

James Robert Porter

1781 Golden Place