

TO: Fr. Bill Murphy

FROM: Neil Hegarty

RE: Fr. Dennis Keefe

DATE: July 10, 1997

I'll be out for the next two weeks and before I leave I thought I'd pass along some thoughts about the case that Bishop Murphy would like reviewed. I hope these impressions will be helpful as you put together the review that the Bishop requested.

The allegations in the case are serious. They involve genital touching, other 'wrestling' and body contact and a request by the boy that the behavior stop. The details are quite specific. There are also comments by a boy from another family that he "knew that this was going to happen". The family reports that the boy felt uncomfortable around Fr. Keefe, was not surprised about the allegation and stated that he was glad that nothing happened to him.

The family did not pursue any legal issues. They requested counseling for their son and wanted to remain involved with the church although their son now had difficulty going to Mass despite having been an altar boy and working in the rectory.

The current problem relates to Fr. Keefe's inability to participate in the steps outlined in the Archdiocesan Policy. ("In cases of alleged sexual molestation and/or abuse, the ordinary procedure is for the Delegate to arrange a medical and /or psychological assessment of the cleric. If the cleric refuses to be assessed, a temporary restriction will be placed by the Archbishop on his ministry and, if appropriate, on his place of residence until a decision is made about the allegation.")

Recent correspondence with Fr. Keefe is through his attorney, Bruce G. Ledoux, Esq.

No one can conclude that a priest is guilty because he refuses to participate in an assessment. However, the assessment process is one that is of great help to us in determining a course of action and is looked to by members of the Review Board as an essential element to help with their deliberations. It is virtually impossible to proceed in any direction without a shred of supportive clinical information. All we have is the priest's firm denial of all of the details of the allegations. Unfortunately, "denial" is a major defense mechanism in issues of sexual misconduct. Without some medical, psychiatric/psychological assessment there is no prudent way for us to proceed, i.e., to determine that Fr. Keefe's denial is not an unconscious defense, but it a genuine expression of innocence by one who has had the benefit of an outside, objective evaluation of his psychic functioning.

My conclusions are that the allegations are serious and credible and will remain so until there is some good psychological evidence to the contrary. We need to have available to us some good evaluation material to help us, and the Review Board, to make a determination that the priest does not have any proclivities towards such behavior, is not in a state of psychological denial, and is open and candid with the evaluators.

The priest's present status of being removed from ministry is somewhat self-imposed. We can appreciate his anger and fright but can only hope that he can break through some of this and take advantage of the help that is being offered.