

CONFIDENTIAL - ROUGH

Dear Father Shanley:

I am writing in response to your letter of February 16, 1979. There are several points which must be made clear at this time:

(1) Where there is growing confusion among the Catholic people on any point which is concerned with belief or with true Christian living, the local bishop has the obligation to inquire into that confusion in order to make a judgment as to whether it truly exists and to see if it is harmful to the flock.

Once he has established that fact, he must then take those steps which will eliminate the confusion and try as best he can to enlighten the souls under his care. I accepted this burden which is also a mission and I intend to carry it out. The purpose of such a mission is the salvation of souls. I expect that God will judge me on it in the end. Large confusion exists among our people on the issue of homosexuality. Your own approach as shown to me on the tapes I have listened to and in the letters I have received has contributed significantly to that confusion. I will prescind for now from the question of orthodoxy. I will recognize the tactis you assume when that question is raised. I am

convinced that the manner of your presentation presents implications which confuse people as to the true teaching of the Church and as to what is the best spiritual course for homosexuals and for their families. Also, your approach is obviously geared to making you appear as the sole presenter of a valid approach on this question.

(2) Let it be clearly understood then that your removal from this work which is effective immediately is in effect regardless of whether or not you have actively taught material which is against the teaching of the Church. The basis for my judgment is the confusion and perplexity presented by your approach. I have gathered the material for this judgment from priests, from Rome, and from the faithful. Still, I hesitated to remove you from this work (to which you were never formally assigned) for two reasons: First, I hoped that you would change to the point where you would not only present Church teaching but also truly advocate and foster it and encourage people to practice it without making yourself the central and irreplaceable person. This constant focus on yourself can only hurt this important and difficult work. This is our

obligation - you know - in every area. If we are ordained, we are to teach what the Church teaches - and to believe it ourselves. The second reason why I hesitated to remove you from this work is one that is very important to me. I did not want for a moment to indicate to people who are homosexuals that I was not personally and pastorally interested in them. I am deeply interested. I have finally concluded that if my interest is sincere I must remove you from this work. Your ministry has tended to confuse as indicated above. It has brought false expectations to people who are homosexuals. Thus, it is damaging to them.

(3) As a pastor, I also must be concerned with a positive pastoral approach to every single person within the Archdiocese of Boston. I have an obligation to have a preferential but not exclusive love for the poor. This has been a special desire as long as I have been a priest. I know a little bit about poverty from my youth and from my work as a priest and a bishop. In regard to the people in my flock who are homosexuals I have the obligation to see that they get the best possible pastoral care. Such care depends on a faithful listening to Christ's

Will as presented to us through the Magisterium. With this in mind, I am planning a whole new approach to this question. It will be marked by fidelity to Church teaching, great personal respect, and compassion and understanding.

(4) Another mark of this new approach will be the elimination of any one priest as the priest for homosexuals or as the spokesman for homosexuals. I think it is demeaning. It says to people - you are to be segregated - there is only one priest who can take care of you. I intend to help all our priests to be more effective in this work. As you also know, I have always been deeply troubled by your own approach and have expressed my anxieties to you on many occasions.

(5) I must turn now to your own attitude. I have changed the assignments of many priests over the years but this is the first time that a priest has gone immediately to the press and the radio. This reaction by you as well as your comments on the airwaves and your recent letter has given added clarity and insight to me concerning you and things I did not wish to believe about you.

There have been indications of this before and I have preferred to suspend

judgment and to hope. Also, the many letters received by me from people rising to your defense indicates further that this has been carefully orchestrated.

Some of the letters have confirmed my judgment relative to the confusion which you create.

(6) I reject completely your accusation that I am inflicting punishment on homosexuals and their families. In fact, if I continue to leave you in this work that is the worst damage I could inflict on them in the long run. I shall pass over in amazed but laughable silence the threats you invoke against me concerning further public pronouncements -this time about our Seminary. I urge and direct you to take a parish assignment as so many of our priests do in this time of such great need where you will be out of the limelight and involved in the ordinary everyday work of a priest - work seen only by a few, unnoticed by the media, but dear to the heart of Christ.

(7) You write of the words of the Holy Father in Mexico. I have read all his talks with great interest. I feel indeed bound by the words you refer to and also by these other words of His Holiness:

"How could there be authentic evangelizing, if there were no ready and sincere reverence for the social Magisterium, in clear awareness that by submitting to it the people of God are not accepting the word of men but the true Word of God."

Naturally, this letter is personal. If, however, a portion of it is released to the media, I will then have the obligation to release all of it to our priests and people through the multi media available to me. I continue to repeat that you are hereby removed from any further ministry to homosexuals and that you must now accept an assignment to one of our parishes.

(Cardinal to put an appropriate ending.)