

March 21

Dear Brian:

On January 25, 95 in your last letter to me you said: "You are aware of our concerns about your roommate and the openly gay employee."

Regarding the employee:

In new York City it is a punishable offense to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. I am at a loss as to what you would have me do. I did not hire this person. Do you want me to fire him? I don't understand how this has become my problem and your concern? The Sisters have assured me that they have no such concern. This gentleman has worked here for years. The Pope has said that we should give special care and concern to gay people. If he should learn any of this he might have a court case against all of us.

Why would you want me to not work in a place employing celibate homosexuals (neither you nor I have reason to believe he is other than celibate)? There are a number of less than celibate heterosexuals on this staff but you seem unconcerned about this. Is it the orientation or the promiscuity to which you object? Virtually any place I might work will have a gay employee. Why is this a concern? Is there a policy proscribing such employment for a priest in my circumstances? How could I possibly look for future employment since it is not permissible for me to ask nor for an employer to answer such inquiries? I'd thus be unemployable.

Regarding a roommate. After discussions with your highly-paid psychiatrist at the Institute of the Living I told you that I never again want to live where I work or live alone. Both are unhealthy for me. Why?

1. I am terrified of dying as did my older brother, of a heart attack, alone.
2. I have had thus far 4 of the 8 probable operations required. After each of them I was unable to care for myself.
3. You have forbidden me to live in a rectory among my fellow priests so like a pariah I have turned to those who might be able to accept me.
4. Do you prefer that I have a female roommate?
5. Is it the policy that I must live alone?
6. Every priest I know is living with a roommate or has done so.
7. Is there any implication that my roommate, too, is gay or non-celibate? How might I address such an allegation inasmuch as the sisters deny they ever thought of such as thing let alone mentioned it?
8. With a housing allowance of only 2 or 3 hundred dollars I would have to live in hovel without the financial aid of a roommate.
9. I live in fear that the man who is stalking me will eventually become so frustrated that he will turn violent and do to me what was recently done to those four nuns: go berserk, run amuck and do me harm. You are aware of his mental fragility.

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I wish you would write back and tell me clearly what it is you require of me. I feel in a double bind. How could anyone satisfy these apparent requirements? It may be that the feeling is: "you made your bed, now lie in it. After 30 years there is still nothing you can do to redeem yourself. You may not continue to run Leo House, you may never live in a rectory, you may never have a roommate, gay or straight, celibate or promiscuous to share expenses, you may not work where there is a gay employee, you may never say mass publicly nor derive income from that as do all other priests, you may never be around children, or gays, you cannot get a recommendation for another job from the Archdiocese and you are effectively unemployable."

Rather than argue with you I have both divested myself of a roommate, and moved in where I work and am now contravening the medical advice for which we paid an arm and a leg. But if I am compelled to leave here in August all of these concerns will arise again and so I am seeking your suggestions now. Brian, you have a tough job and I don't mean to add to your burdens. But I see from the monthly notes that you are still in process of developing policies for us and ironing out my restrictions may be of help to those who come after.

Finally I am again grateful to you for your assistance in so many ways, not the least of which being the request for retirement recently granted.

cordially,

*Paul D. Shanley*  
Paul Shanley