

April 25, 1989

PERSONAL/CONFIDENTIAL

Dr. Henry P. Ouellette, Ph.D.
Director, Consultation Service
For Clergy and Religious
282 Concord Street
Manchester, NH 03104

Dear Doctor Ouellette:

I write to you in reference to Father Richard Lower, whom I am referring to you for therapy and any testing programs you feel would be helpful. Father Lower is currently on a sick leave and pursuing treatment at a pain clinic in Boston for chronic back problems which have included several operations. He will be finished with that program in mid May, and will be contacting you for an initial appointment on or about that time.

Father Lower has always shown himself to be an effective priest. However, in his last assignment at Saint John Neumann in Merrimack, he put himself into a very compromising situation which necessitated his resignation from the parish. It is the significance of this situation which the Diocese wishes him to pursue with you. Briefly, the situation was this. A young man named [redacted] was to come to the rectory one evening to inquire about becoming a Catholic. He and Father Lower had met once or twice briefly, in passing, prior to this scheduled appointment. [redacted] claims that several days before the appointment he received a phone call from Father Lower, inquiring what he liked to drink. When he responded beer and tequila, Father Lower promised to have some for him, although [redacted] claimed that this was not necessary. When he arrived for the appointment late one evening after finishing work, he and Father Lower had several drinks during the course of their conversation, during which he shared with Father Lower many of the troubling details of his past. He claims that Father Lower then proceeded to a process of sexual seduction which he did not recognize until it was too late. This process involved various relaxation techniques that ultimately resulted in a full body massage given to him while he was naked on Father Lower's bed. He claims that Father Lower ultimately undressed himself and, lying naked with him, proceeded to an act of masturbation. When questioned as to why he permitted all this, [redacted] claims that he doesn't know, that it might have been the drinking and possibly the fact that one step led to another so smoothly that he didn't see what Father Lower, who he trusted as a priest, was planning.

*age?
at least 18
to drink?*

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[redacted] adamantly claims that he is not homosexual and never had any homosexual or heterosexual experiences prior to that evening. [redacted] was very disturbed by all this, and threatened legal action against Father Lower unless the Diocese did something. (It became clear to me in the course of my conversation with [redacted] that he had shared this story with the people he was living with in Merrimack and with others. Given his threats and the real possibility that a number of people in that parish knew the situation, there was no reasonable alternative except to ask Father Lower to resign. [redacted] ultimately was placated by this step with the assurance that Father Lower would be getting assistance so that the same thing would not occur with someone else.)

When I spoke with Father Lower about these details, he admitted to everything except the final part of [redacted] story. In other words, he does not admit to getting into bed naked and the act of masturbation. When questioned as to what he had in mind leading to the massage, he claims he was trying to help this man, who was greatly anxious and troubled, to relax. Father Lower does not admit to being homosexual or to having any problems in this area. When I asked him if he realized that, even if he was telling the truth, he had put himself into a very serious situation, he admitted that he had. He admits to the imprudence of the whole scenario. He claims not to understand what motivated him to proceed in the way he did. It seems to us important that Father Lower be assisted to see clearly the truth of this situation, what it means in his own life and, if necessary, what adjustments he must make to be sure that no repetitions of this sort of behavior occur.

The Diocese is appreciative to you for your assistance in this regard. Father Lower has agreed to allow you to share with the Diocese the results of any general testing that you deem might be appropriate.

Father Lower will be going to the sabbatical program in Rome in September, and will not be reassigned to a parish until Fall, if his counseling with you seems to indicate that such an assignment is appropriate.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

(Msgr.) Francis J. Christian
Secretary
Chancellor

