

August 18, 1999

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
Protected  
by Attorney/Client Privilege

[Redacted]

Dear [Redacted]

Dear Anthony and Ellen

I would like to begin by thanking you for your letter of August 12<sup>th</sup> in which you bring to my attention some serious problems which your son, [Redacted] had in the Sacrament of Penance at Epiphany Parish in Normal. I want to assure you that you did the right thing by writing to me so that we could investigate this allegation insofar as we are able and make an intervention to see that such things do not happen in this parish again.

While I do not intend to revisit all of the topics we discussed by phone on the morning of August 18<sup>th</sup>, I do want to assure you and your family of the following:

1. Please express to your son my deepest sorrow at the way in which his confession was handled by Father Maloney. It is certainly inappropriate to discuss such things as [Redacted] recalls with anyone in such a manner, let alone in the Sacrament of Penance. Please assure him that the Church is deeply distressed at the scandal which was taken by him and presumably given to him by his confessor.

2. Also, please assure your son that he has the right to go to confession anonymously if he so chooses. It is simply not right to force anyone to go to confession "face-to-face".

3. Also assure your son that he has the right to confess his sins in a normal fashion without being interrogated or questioned by the priest unless there is some aspect of the sin that the priest does not understand and which would make a difference in judging his spiritual situation before Almighty God. It is certainly inappropriate for a person who already knows his sins to be questioned by the priest in the fashion which you refer to in your letter of August 12<sup>th</sup>.

As I indicated to you over the phone, because the Seal of Confession is involved it is very difficult to intervene in a situation such as this. It is doubly difficult since you have refused me permission (which I can understand in this case) to reveal your name to Father Maloney. This does

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not mean, however, that there is nothing I can do - only that there is a limited amount that I can do. As I stated to you in our phone conversation, in the next week or so (as soon as Father Maloney regains his strength from his recent heart surgery) I will be visiting with him and discussing with him this letter without, of course, using your names. I will indicate to him that I realize that he cannot offer a defense because of the seal of confession, but that he should adjust his confessional practice in light of these allegations. I will also direct him to provide anonymous confession and to cease interrogating penitents unless they request his help in making an integral confession.

Once again, on behalf of the Church and myself, I express our deep sorrow for any sadness and scandal which was caused to your family and especially to your son, [REDACTED]. Please assure him of a special remembrance in my prayers that he will be able to realize that this is not normally done in the Sacrament of Penance and certainly not by the normal priest/confessor. I hope that he will in the future find a fine confessor who will help him grow in the faith and express to him the love of the Lord, even when he sins.

If I can be of any further assistance or if you know of any other concerns which I should know of, please contact me as soon as possible.

With warmest personal regards, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

Monsignor Steven P. Rohlf, S.T.D., V.G.  
Vicar General, Chancellor

SPR/ps  
cc: Most Rev. John J. Myers  
Msgr. James F. Campbell