

St Elizabeth's Hospital

of Boston

736 Cambridge Street Boston, Massachusetts 02135 617/789-3000

September 24, 1993

Rev. Edward M. O'Flaherty, S.J.,
St. William Hall,
5 Lake Street,
Brighton, Massachusetts 02135.

Dear Ed,

In response to our conversation of two weeks ago, I am now trying my best to chronicle what has happened to me since January of this year when I began this assignment. I will do so as best I can ^{to write} in the order of events since my arrival here at the hospital:

. I was asked by Cardinal Law to come here as the assistant to the chaplain and resident C.P.E. student. I said yes. I went to: Jim McCarthy, Brian McMahon, John Grimes and Lucien Sawyer for acceptance and for explanation. All seemed to agree that I should be accepted and tried as best they could to explain what I would be doing. I asked for an exact description of what my responsibilities ^{were} as assistant to the chaplain and resident C.P.E. student. I wanted to know what I was responsible to first; no one gave me an exact answer, except for Lucien who told me that I would be back-up for the chaplain and that the program of C.P.E. student was more important. Brian didn't quite see it that way, saying that C.P.E. was not necessary for hospital chaplaincy, and that he would not want me to neglect my duties as a chaplain. From the beginning there was trouble.

. As I said, Brian does not have high regard for C.P.E. He is also head of the Pastoral Care Department, I was his assistant and I had to live with him as well as work with him.

. Until December 23, 1992 I was administrator at St. Joseph in Everett. I had to move into my quarters in the chaplain's residence by January 5, 1993, and start C.P.E. on January 12. In addition to that I had to learn the hospital. Words do not convey what this means. St. Elizabeth's is very big. I had to learn my way around, learn the procedure, come to know the medical terminologies of the various departments, learn the names of staff and employees, and learn to know when I could approach patients at various times and procedures during medical care. In addition to this I had to do C.P.E.

. C.P.E. met on Monday and Tuesday. I have duty in the hospital on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. That meant that I had to leave class when I was called and I had to arrive late very often. John Grimes told me that there would be no problem, the other two supervisors agreed, viz., Sr. Cathy O'Connor and Sr. Kathy Galvin. They told me that they would give me plenty of time to get used to things. I was at a loss. I came in midyear. They would talk about issues with the other students that would have no bearing on me, as they pertained to what had happened previously. Terms were used which I didn't understand like S.A.I. (Spiritual Assessment Inventory). In short, I was lost.

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They were fair at first, but they seemed to ignore me or become upset with me. They never gave me a schedule of supervisory meetings. John Grimes said that he told me about them, but I don't remember that happening. I told him that I would gladly go out to Pope John XXIII Seminary to meet with him, but every-time I called, he wouldn't be in. He said he didn't receive my messages, I made two of them. He was here at the hospital only on Tuesdays, and very often I would have to go to the E.R. or the O.R. or other parts of the hospital at the requests of patients, nurses or the sisters on the pastoral staff. I also never received a schedule of S.A.I. (verbatim) dates, i.e., when I was due to do a verbatim. They say I received them, but I didn't. They gave me a great deal of reading to do at the beginning of the course on the meaning and requirements of C.P.E. I was however, still getting used to the hospital and still in the process of moving in. I didn't have a desk until March, and then when I got the desk, I didn't have a chair for it. Try working without a desk.

. One day towards the end of the semester I was told by John that it just wasn't working out and that I had to leave the program. He said that the C.P.E. staff had bent over backwards for me. In fact they hadn't. They just threw me out. They could have said, the first semester was too much, Jim, we don't think we can count it, you'll have to start again in the summer. No, just, don't come back. They simply did not like me, nor the things I said, nor my views or feelings. I suppose they could say that my being there or not was too disruptive, in that case they are quite right, but they should have known that. They also made no consideration for fatigue. I think only another ordained hospital chaplain can appreciate this. Very often I am called out at early hours of the morning to attend patients or go to the E.R. or to a code. I am not the type who can go right back to sleep, others can, I can't. At times I would be exhausted in class and in addition to class I would have to do my regular hospital rounds.

. I do think that I was unfairly dismissed. For all their talk of feelings, they didn't seem to care about me. They just decided that I wasn't good for the program and forced me out.

. I then went to the Cardinal to explain things. He seemed to understand. I asked him what I should do, and he told me to stay at the hospital. I asked him if I should go to Jim McCarthy at Personnel and he said no.

. Several weeks later an advertizement appeared in the monthly archdiocesan mailing for my position here at the hospital. I then wrote to the Cardinal again asking him what I should do as I presumed that I would have to vacate my quarters and that I would have to look for another assignment. He never wrote back. This was in July.

. Since the end of C.P.E. I presumed that I would be leaving eventually and began to think of myself as leaving the hospital; consequently I did not engage myself any further in the life of the hospital except to be Brian's

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backup.

. In the beginning of the summer, Brian told me that he would like for me to change my days off from Thursday - Friday to Wednesday - ~~Friday~~ ^{Thursday}. He said that very often the hospital volume of business decreases in the summer as the doctors are away, and that we could take weekends off. I said fine. He never took any, nor did I. On August 11 he told me that he would be leaving August 26th and returning on September 9th or 10th for his vacation. I said good, but that I would like to spend some time with my parents in Maine as the summer ends quickly there. I told him that I would like to leave on August 15th and that I would return on the 26th, possibly the 25th so that he could leave early. He said that he could think of nothing "on the books" and that it would be fine by him. I later agreed to do a funeral in Dorchester on the 16th of August, a Monday. I presumed that I would be free, that is the only reason I agreed. Brian had told me that he had a baptism on the 15th and asked if I could go on the 16th. I agreed, so I presumed that I had nothing to do that Monday. Brian didn't return. I had to ask the sisters to do a communion service in place of the noon Mass here at the hospital. They said fine; that this is what they used to do on Brian's day off when he was alone. I went to the funeral and took the pager with me. Right before the start of the funeral, the hospital paged me. I answered that I couldn't get back immediately, that it would take at least two hours as I had to do both funeral and interment. The nurse who paged me was angry, the widow of the deceased patient was hurt and uncomforted. I felt ever so bad about that, but there was noting I could do. Many months before I had asked Brian what to do if there were an emergency when we are away. He said try to get back if you can, if you can't, then you can't. That seemed to make sense to me.

. On the 26th of August, I had another funeral to attend. I called that morning looking for Brian. He wasn't available. I asked the secretary to call one of the sisters to the phone. Sr. Virginia came and I explained to her that I had to go to a funeral and asked her to do a communion service, and that I would be back as soon as possible as I didn't have to go to the interment. She said not to worry, that they would work things out.

. I returned to find a copy of a letter to Brian from Lucien complaining about the fact that no priest was present for the death of a patient on Aug. 16th. Brian had written on the copy, Jim, you can respond if you want to. I decided to call Lucien. He wasn't in. He was at the Mass. General. I called him the following day. He said, oh you're back. I said yes, I returned yesterday shortly after noon. He said Oh, Brian didn't know where you were, that you didn't tell him you were going on vacation and that you hadn't returned for the start of his and that he had no idea where you were. I said this comes as a surprise to me. I then explained everything to Lucien and he told me that he was satisfied with my explanation.

. In the meantime I had called the Cardinal to ask him for permission to withdraw from the hospital. I did this again, because I wanted to know what to do

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as I thought I would have to leave my quarters and find a new assignment. He wasn't in and when he called me back he gave me permission to withdraw and told me that he would tell Jim McCarthy about it, that is, my permission to withdraw from the hospital. He then shocked me by telling me that there had been complaints that I wasn't in the hospital when I was supposed to be and that I had neglected my duties. He thought the problem might be with me and he wanted to me to go to John McCormack. I told him that I would prefer someone else and he told me to go to you. I of course said I would.

. Last week I called Kevin Deeley at Personnel to make arrangements for an assignment and he told me that that could not be done until statements came in writing from John Grimes, Brian and Lucien about what had happened while I was here at the hospital. He said John McCormack wanted things clarified. If he wanted them clarified why wasn't I asked for something in writing. I called Lucien and he told me that he had just been made aware of that and that he would get to Brian and John Grimes. This seems unfair and unnecessary. After all, I do have the Cardinal's permission and no other priest has to go through this when he leaves an assignment.

Ed, I think I answered as a priest when I said yes to the Cardinal. He told me that it was in the best interests of the Archdiocese and that he needed priests with national certification to serve in the Archdiocese. I said yes. Please remember that this was something I did not ask for, but rather I was asked to take it. I would like you also to note that Brian told me not to worry about time off, to take as much as I would like. I went away four times since January. I was ten days in Florida in April, four days in Indiana in April, ten days in Europe in June and ten days in Maine in August. Brian told me that he keeps records of the time off that I take (something I think is totally unnecessary and that he notes when my car is in the garage and when its not). I took three more days than I should have according to canon law. Mea culpa.


him
me Brian and I have talked this out. He says that he does remember my telling me that I would be away, but he adds that he said that he would get back to me about my August vacation, I don't remember his saying that, but if he did, he never got back to me. So, either way, I would naturally have assumed that everything was alright since he said he could think of nothing on the books. He also agreed that he felt that I would not neglect my duties, and that if I had, it was simply a misunderstanding.

I'm sorry this letter took so long, Ed, but in light of the fact that written reports are being submitted on me, then I thought that I had better try to be as precise and cogent as possible. I am very grateful for your time and understanding.

Prayers!!!

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In the Lord we share,



Rev. James J. Foley
Assistant to the Chaplain