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Rev. John B. McCormack
Archdiocese of Boston
2121 Commonwealth Ave.

Dear John,

After reviewing Dr. Shaner's letter about Father Shanley and again reflecting on your own letter of 10/31/91, it does seem clear that putting him on disability makes sense. I do not know his age, but presume he is close to 65. Whether he is or not, it is most clear from Dr. Shaner's letter and the inclination of the Archdiocese not to press Fr. Shanley to return here, that if Fr. Shanley were to return, he would, in fact, do no work.

At core is what causes his disability. It certainly is not his hiatus hernia. "Anxiety neurosis" is not a diagnosis any longer made by modern psychiatric diagnostic nosology, but Dr. Shaner's sense of it is conveyed, namely, that Fr. Shanley is primarily crippled by his psychiatric illness. It is virtually certain that his psychiatric diagnosis is more severe than what used to be called anxiety neurosis. Should he, in fact, be diagnosed via formal psychiatric consultation? If he has basically not worked his entire life, it is not likely that a curable condition will be discovered, treated, and eradicated sufficiently so that he could, or would want to, work. If his disability came on after 40, this might be a worthwhile consideration.

Stories like that of Fr. Shanley's can be difficult to accept at face value and it is not unkind to ask outright whether his avoidance of work is voluntary. Palm Springs is not ordinarily associated with a life of hardship, so that finding a way to get someone to support you financially to live there without having to work is sufficiently appealing to make a liar and manipulator of at least a few people. To answer this question in the negative for Fr. Shanley there is insufficient information in Dr. Shaner's letter. You and others may have enough supplementary information to answer the question.

Finally, you mention the question of full or partial disability, although you did not address it to me. I can assure you, however, that considerations of the last paragraph can make full disability awards difficult to part with.

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I of course would be delighted to discuss this case with you by phone or in person--and I hope that our next meeting will not be far off! Blessings to you for all your work on behalf of our brother priests.

Best,



Ned Cassem, SJ, MD