

6 Feb

MEMO

Meeting with Reverend Daniel Clark
January 17, 1990

I had requested a meeting with Father Dan Clark both at the suggestion of the archbishop and the Personnel Board following the communication the Personnel Board received from Father Dan Clark regarding future assignment. Dan had indicated on his Personnel Preference Form in the Fall of 1989 a willingness to be assigned to ministry. Both the board and the archbishop were interested in what Dan's expectations were from this in light of his conviction and the restrictions placed upon him by the court and his probation. I posed the question to Dan as to what exactly he was anticipating from this. He indicated that it was his understanding from his attorney that once the civil litigation was resolved that he was free to accept an assignment. The civil litigation was resolved in 1989.

Dan indicated that his first desire was to resume some pastoral care ministry, preferably in a hospital. He noted that he has spoken with Chaplain Jim Pollard of Baptist East Hospital, who indicated a willingness to take him back as their staff Catholic Chaplain. He also noted that John Maloney had offered him a job working with sexual addicts and that a Tom Bucky of Our Lady of Peace Hospital had discussed with him the possibility of employment in leading ACOA groups.

I told Dan that I wanted to convey to him what I had gathered from a conversation I had with John Ford regarding his request for some sanction from the archbishop to seek certification with some national association of Catholic chaplains. Essentially, what I conveyed to him was that Attorney John Ford did not see anyway clear for the archbishop to ever assign or even sanction Dan in a ministerial role so long as the restrictions of his probation were in effect. I asked Dan specifically how he understood the restrictions of his probation and he defined them as restricting him from being placed in a position of trust with minors for a period of fifteen years. I then asked Dan what he felt the archdiocese could do in light of such severe restrictions. He noted that he felt a pastoral care position would not violate the spirit or the letter of that restriction.

I pointed out to Dan that what I was relaying to him was strictly a legal opinion, not necessarily one of compassion or pastoral practice but that it was not, nonetheless, devoid of that. The point was to be taken that any position of ministry in which the archbishop would either assign or sanction Dan's participation by its very nature implied a position of trust, even if specifically it did not involve children. An example would be that of chaplain to a nursing home. There would, obviously, not be any direct ministry to minor children but his position there could obviously lead to contact with children and he would be viewed as holding a position of trust.

I noted for Dan that the only sort of pastoral ministry I could envision where there might be no possibility of being entrusted to children would be a penal institution where no children would ever be permitted. Dan said that he was quite shocked by such an interpretation and that this was far more restrictive than anything he had imagined and that it saddened him.

He noted that he misses exercising his sacramental priesthood. He said that on Christmas Eve for the first time, at the Passionist's insistence, he did concelebrate the Midnight Mass at St. Agnes. Because of the restrictions the archbishop has placed upon him (and he doesn't know if these violate those restrictions or not) he felt very uncomfortable in this role. He says Mass privately. There have been some occasions in his work with sexual addicts groups and adult children of alcoholics groups where a logical expression of his ministry would be to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Dan has refrained from doing so because of the restrictions and asked if I thought that appropriate. I told him that I would take that up with the archbishop but in the meantime it probably was an appropriate understanding on his part. He asked if it was ever appropriate to wear the Roman collar in public.

I asked Dan specifically about jobs he might assume that would neither require nor imply an assignment or a sanction from Archbishop Kelly, for example, if in fact John Maloney had some staff position to offer him or Our Lady of Peace. Dan said that being an adult child of an alcoholic, official sanctions and titles and positions were important to him and that naturally there was a need for that sort of affirmation from the archbishop and from the church. But if it can't be; it can't be. At no time did Dan ever bring up the subject of laicization or a leave of absence. I asked Dan if he could understand and appreciate the strictly legal vantage point from which John Ford was advising the archbishop; he said he understood it but indeed did find it overly restrictive.

I advised Dan that it was certainly within his rights to challenge the interpretation that I was portraying to him, either to myself or Archbishop Kelly and specifically ask for an assignment. At that time the archbishop would be compelled to render a judgment as to whether or not he would abide by this very strict interpretation that John Ford is affording him.

Dan notes that his health is generally good. He tires easily. I noted that we were taking the elevator to the second floor and Dan said that taking the stairs is really too much for him. This raises in me questions as to how active Dan could be if he did have a job of an assignment. Dan has gained a great deal of weight since the last time I saw him. He attributes this, in part, to having quit smoking within the past month. He said that his next project is to try to lose the twenty or so pounds he has gained in recent months.

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