



Holy Spirit Church

Phone 502-343-3346

P. O. Box 247

Jamestown, Kentucky 42629

December 31, 1980

Dear Brother Andrew,

I am writing to inquire about the Missionary Brothers of Charity. Let me first tell you a little about myself, and then you can perhaps offer me some information or direction.

I am a priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville. For the past eight years, I have been serving the Catholics and the poor and the unchurched in two mission churches in southern Kentucky. This part of Kentucky is a poverty area on the "outskirts" of Appalachia. It is a pretty active area with about seven priests and 14 nuns serving a 10-county area. I am the only priest serving in counties of my two churches, and a Victory Hill Sister works with me. The percentage of Catholics is less than one per cent (140 Catholics in my two counties), so a great deal of our time is spent working with the poor. I relate very well with the poor, the marginal, and the outcasts of society.

During the past year or so, I have been feeling a desire and calling to work exclusively with the poor outside the ordinary parish setting. I feel a desire and calling to live a life of poverty and to seek the freedom that such a life can bring.

Insofar as my present assignment may be ending as early as June 1981, I am now in the process of discernment. In contemplating my next area of ministry following my present assignment, I have had a strong desire to work in the inner city of Louisville, living a simple gospel life among the poor and marginal. But not in a parish setting.

In much of my reading in recent months, I have come across "accidentally" a great deal about Mother Teresa and the Missionary Brothers. I also read recently the autobiography of Dorothy Day, which a friend gave me to read. I took the book, not intending to read it but did, and it was a moving experience. I believe that the Spirit is leading me in this direction. Most recently I read the article in *Columbian* magazine about the Missionary Brothers. I need to know more, and, if it be God's will, to become a Missionary Brother.

DAR 05759



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In my ministry I have been engaged oftentimes as a vocal advocate of justice. My inclination is leaning more toward a simple living of the gospel without having my voice heard except by works of charity.

In case you may be wondering, I am not a "problem" priest. I suppose that most of the people who know me would judge me a "success." If it be God's will, I can continue to function effectively in a parish situation. However, I find it difficult to live the call to poverty in my present situation. Although I do not live in luxurious accommodations, my apartment is nicer than many of the people's homes that I serve, and this is an embarrassment to me.

In short, I feel a need and an obligation and calling to serve the poor in a life of poverty, and to pursue this at the present time.

I have not discussed this with my Archbishop yet, but am anticipating to do so within the next month.

I will be anxiously awaiting any information or suggestions that you can offer.

Sincerely in Christ,

Thomas H. Clark

P.S. I forgot to mention that I am 44 years old and am in good health. I hope that my age in itself will not disqualify me in pursuing the possibility of living the life of a Missionary Brother of Charity. In the next few months, I have some vacation time coming, so I would be willing to come to Los Angeles to get more first-hand knowledge and to help in my process of discernment.

DAR 05760