



SAINTS MARY AND ELIZABETH HOSPITAL

4400 CHURCHMAN AVENUE
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40215

April 24, 1979

Most Reverend Thomas J. McDonough
212 East College Street
P.O. Box 1073
Louisville, Kentucky 40201

Dear Archbishop McDonough,

I am writing to express my concern regarding Father Arthur Wood and his insensitive, uncaring, unChristian behavior as seen in his role of hospital chaplain. Endless examples could be given, however, I'll just mention a few.

In "relating" with patients, families and staff there is only superficial recognition of the person. Whether the patient is conscious, or unconscious he usually treats them the same. He doesn't want to know if a person is deaf, blind, deeply grieved or depressed. He only wants a "request" of the sacrament desired. He may see a family member of a dying woman and he'll say, "Hi! Hope your mother is doing better." Then he continues to walk. Family members have asked me, "Why, when people need comfort and consolation does the hospital have such a chaplain? So much good could be done."

He prefers to discount the Pastoral Care Department by checking with the nursing staff if someone is really critical enough to be anointed. Though the Pastoral Care Staff would like to make a more supportive, communal experience of anointing, maybe with family and some staff invited to be present, we know this would only highlight the poor situation of such superficiality in administration of the sacrament. On the other hand, we would feel quite comfortable if the priests of SS. Simon and Jude were involved.

Regarding a monthly Bereavement Mass, Father Wood believes that grief is over in three days so there is no need to acknowledge feelings. Also there is no need to welcome the Protestants and make even the slightest instruction as to what they can expect. Even after the congregation may begin, saying the Holy, Holy, Holy he is likely to start singing it without the slightest introduction of his intention. Though support is given during these meetings it is at the expense of much embarrassment.

During the last three years there has been much segregation of hospital staff from sharing the religious support of patients. This is due to Father Wood not wanting to relate with staff. This is contrary to the attitude promoted by National Association of Catholic Chaplains in ^{that} everyone shares in pastoral care.

Ministers who frequently visit SS. Mary and Elizabeth, occasionally comment that they "never see the Chaplain; what does he do." They never see his office open. Father Wood says he provides 24 hour coverage but this is far from true. His coverage is very spotty. Services he provides consists in zipping through Mass, zapping people with the sacrament of the sick and like a machine dispensing Eucharist to two of the five Hospital floors. At a moments notice he may call a pastoral associate and say "I won't be giving my Communion today." thus increasing others work. He prefers not to attend Pastoral Care meetings since it would interrupt his nap.

As you consider the Concerns of '79 please keep in mind that families need most support when they are suffering in hospitals. Often it is the ripe time to enliven peoples' faith and devotion. In comparison with the dedication of our Protestant ministers, Catholics have much to learn of hospital visitations. The Chaplain could be the prime example of care, concern, and compassion. He/She could be the initiator of a caring environment. Please help this situation to improve.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Lossie, SCN
Bonnie Lossie, SCN
Pastoral Associate

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cc: Reverend Joseph Graffis
Sister Janice Campbell