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St. Agatha-St. James Church

3726 CHESTNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19104
June 25, 1983



His Eminence
John Cardinal Krol, D.D., J.C.D.
Archbishop of Philadelphia
222 N. 17th Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19103

Your Eminence:

The purpose of this letter is twofold (1) informative and possibly (2) some special consideration. In September I will have completed my five years at St. Agatha - St. James Parish; my five year interview with Father Walker took place on Wednesday, June 22nd and my imminent transfer leaves me with mixed emotions - please let me briefly explain.

Two months after my appointment here (November, 1978) the very first group of H'Mong refugees who were settled in the United States came to Philadelphia and wound up right here in our parish. They began coming to our Sunday Masses and since I smiled in H'Mong (Ha-Ha) they would always come to me, shake my hand, bow, and then try to tell me something, thinking I could understand them. As Winter approached their terrific "physical" needs became most obvious and with a little exposure on T.V. and in the newspapers - both Catholic and secular - many good things began happening. Finally, two bi-lingual teenagers came to Philadelphia and as more and more people came to me I relied heavily on them for help in communicating. When the barest necessities were met the need to be ministered to shifted from the physical to the spiritual and so we began informational instruction classes which have continued from then until the present. My interpreters are now teaching me to speak the H'Mong language.

Enough said! Where are we now? We have 800 H'Mong persons in Philadelphia. 675 in West Philadelphia; 125 in Logan; About 1/2 are catholic and the rest are Christian and most of them come to Mass at St. Agatha - St. James. With some gentle coercion I feel most of them will become Catholic in the next several years. Besides our instruction classes I have been running both H'Mong Literacy and English Literacy classes for the Adults, some skill training for the men and crafts classes for the women to help them learn English and hopefully get employment. All of the H'Mong people between the ages of 18 and 45 have been cut off Public Assistance since March 30th and so are practically destitute except for whatever odd jobs I have been able to get them

Your Eminence, much more could be said, but in a word, I am really the only priest they have known since they've come to the United States and since they are not yet fully assimilated into our American Culture it would be a great hardship for them if I were to be cut off from them at this particular time which brings up the question of possible special consideration.

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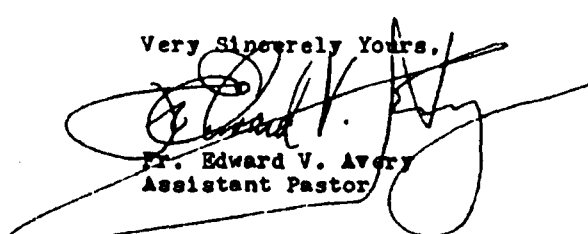
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Your Eminence, as you are considering the transfer to my new assignment may I be so bold to request Parish work with the possibility of continuing my work with the H'Mong people. Believe it or not, as a Parish Priest I could accomplish so much more because over the past five years with my heavy hospital schedule the only time I have been able to accomplish the things I am doing are my days and nights off hospital duty. I'm not complaining but on the contrary I thank God every day for this appointment for if I had not been here I would never have known the H'Mong people.

As to the type of Parish I have no preference - I love my work in the Black Apostolate and I have been in both Suburban and Rural parishes. Your Eminence, I'm not asking for less work, I'm only asking for the opportunity to spend a little more time to help these wonderful people get on their feet. No matter what your decision I fully understand and appreciate your position, and as your obedient servant accept your decision. Thank You for everything and may God continue to Bless you.

Very Sincerely Yours,


Fr. Edward V. Avery
Assistant Pastor

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