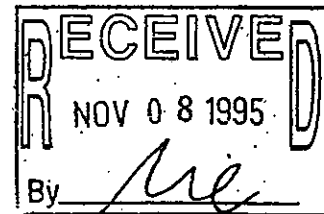


November 2, 1995  
Feast of All Souls

The Most Reverend Gerald Barnes  
Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of San Bernardino  
1450 North "D" Street  
San Bernardino, CA 92405



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Your Excellency:

I am writing to you on a matter of grave concern rapidly coming to light within and outside our Catholic community at Holy Innocents parish in Victorville.

As you know Holy Innocents is in the midst of building a new church. However, this is not a matter of "bricks and mortar"; and as you and I both realize, our Faith is not founded on the things of this world. I shall have more to say on that later.

The issue here lies with our Pastor, Father Peter Brennan. He has fathered a child, a baby [redacted] was born October 18, 1995 at Victor Valley Community Hospital in Victorville. The name given to [redacted] is [redacted]. I do not know what surname was given to the child.

I was made aware of this by a member of the family of the ex-spouse of the birth-mother. The mother of the child is an [redacted] in Victorville and a member of the parish. She was involved as the Counsel for the Building Program at Holy Innocents. "It is well-known that Father Brennan visits this woman's home frequently, perhaps to the point of excess." A hostess at a local restaurant, often frequented by Holy Innocents parishioners, recently told several parishioners that "the beautiful baby was the first one Father Brennan ever saw born." A parishioner recently made the statement that "the baby looks just like Father Brennan."

A recent meeting took place between Father Brennan, a fellow priest-friend of his, and my friend, the parish RCIA Director. The ensuing dialogue was an exercise in "damage control" by the two priests. Father Brennan's priest-friend stated that, "After all, they were two consenting adults and it's unfortunate that a baby was born." My friend asked, "Do you love this woman?", to which Father Brennan replied, "I'm not sure. Once you're touched by the Lord, it's difficult to love anyone else." His priest-friend further stated, "Look what he (Father Brennan) has done for the Church--building all those churches." Bricks and mortar!

Along those same lines, perhaps Father Brennan "wants" to be found out. It would seem so. Nevertheless, I do not believe he will come to you as he should.

Bishop, the ramifications of such behaviors are beginning to emerge. Some parish members are considering finding other churches, not necessarily Catholic, to

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attend. They feel betrayed and disillusioned with Catholicism. Others are wringing their hands in quiet anxiety, ambivalent about what to do because they don't want to hurt Father, or worse, they fear his wrath. I am aware of many parishioners privy to this unfortunate information. It is only a matter of time before it becomes public knowledge and turns into a full-fledged scandal.

This letter is written neither in anger nor from any desire for vengeance towards Father Brennan. Au contraire, it flows from fidelity to the Church, and out of charity and concern for the woman, their child, and for Father Brennan and his problems. Clearly he has some gravely serious ones which he needs to acknowledge, and to seek help to resolve them.

What about the child? Will \_\_\_\_\_ never know who \_\_\_\_\_ father really is? We as Catholics talk about family life so much and the importance of the nuclear family, i.e., a mother and father's authentic presence to their child. What we have in the above situation is a "slap in the face" to what we believe, done by a Catholic priest, vowed to teach and exemplify the truths of the Gospel. No one can have it both ways.

What about our Catholic community here at Holy Innocents? Will it ever be a viable one under the care of a priest whose heart is torn?—A priest who promotes one thing in public and another one in secrecy. My response (to that) is that the faith of many will not grow, and they will fall and drift away. Nothing will survive for too long if it is built on deception. One cannot give to others what he himself has lost and does not have, i.e., a true, vibrant, and practical faith.

More questions arise concerning the Sacramental life of this community and the dispensation of the Sacraments. I know as long as the Mass is celebrated validly in form and matter it will be efficacious for the community. However, what about Father Brennan? Has he been to confession? I hope so, for his own spiritual good! Has he ceased his relationship with the woman? Apparently not. He has been seen with her on a fairly regular basis.

Bishop, it is not up to me to determine what is to be done in this matter. However, I strongly plead that you personally investigate this matter, with perhaps a speedy retirement for Father Brennan. Please do not transfer him to some other parish where he may engage in the same activity. It is reported that he has fathered other children at a previous parish in La Quinta.

Bishop, I love my Catholic faith. I want to see it grow and flourish in this desert community. What we have now is destructive to that growth.

Finally, in order to qualify our right to speak out on such matters, I cite the Doctor Communis, St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, IIa-IIae, Q. 33, Art. 3, Resp. to Obsj. 2 and 3:

***Just as he who has the means wherewith to give corporal assistance is rich in this respect, so he whose reason is gifted with the sane judgment, so as to be able to correct another's wrong-doing, is, in this respect to be looked on as a superior.....Even in the physical order certain things act mutually on one another, through being in some respect higher than one another, in so far as each is in somewhat in act, and somewhat in potentiality with regard to another. In like manner, one man can correct another insofar as he has a sane judgment in a matter wherein the other sins, though he is not his superior simply.***

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I am available to speak with you on this matter. I hope to hear from you soon.

I am, sincerely yours in Christ, and asking your help and blessing on us all,

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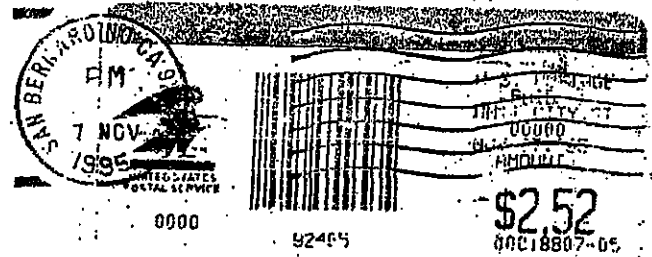
cc: Most Reverend Agostino Cacciavillan, D.J.D.  
Sister Mary Jo Nelson, Diocese of San Bernardino  
Rt. Rev. Msgr. Donald Webber

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**MAIL**



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