

June 6, 1979

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Rt. Rev. Brendan Downey, O.S.B.
Abbot
St. Benedict's Abbey
Atchison, KS 66002

Dear Abbot Brendan:

I feel I must write to you in order to apprise you of a recent development involving Father John Forrester who is, as you know, a priest of your Abbey and who has been doing priestly work here in the Archdiocese of Seattle for the past six years. Last week I was compelled to call Father Forrester into the office and tell him that it was imperative that he leave the area at once. This was a very difficult thing for me to do, particularly in view of the fact that only one day before he had celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest, but the circumstances which were brought to my attention left me no other choice. Let me share them with you.

The pastor and associate pastor of All Saints Parish of Puyallup, where Father Forrester served as a priest for approximately three years, came last week to report to me that the parents of a young lad in the eighth grade of the parish school had reported to them that their son had literally broken down one night and told them that Father Forrester had been sexually involved with him since he was in the fifth grade. Needless to say, the parents were terribly upset and nearly beside themselves with anger. In addition, the young boy also indicated that three or four others of his classmates had been similarly involved over that same period of time.

How the matter ever remained under wraps for such a long period of time is difficult for me to understand. Possibly the boys were sworn to secrecy or possibly their deep regard for Father Forrester prompted them to remain silent. Whatever the case, a sex education lecture given by the current associate pastor was the catalyst for the young lad breaking down and telling his parents.

When I sat down with Father Forrester to confront him with this matter, he made no attempt to deny the accusations. I told him that I felt very badly that he had not approached me long ago to seek assistance for dealing with this serious problem because

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I would have done my utmost to aid him in whatever way possible. However, because of the gravity of the matter and because of the potential repercussions that could be expected from the parents of these boys were he to remain in this area, I told him that I had no choice but to strongly advise him to leave the area at once. I think you will agree that, under the circumstances, we can no longer seriously entertain the possibility of incardinating him in this Archdiocese.

Needless to say, I feel very badly about this whole situation. The harm done to the young boys and to their families is difficult to calculate but I pray that some follow-through work on the part of the pastor of All Saints Parish and his associate will help to heal the wounds. I also feel badly for Father Forrester because I certainly would like to be able to offer to help him since he is so obviously in need of professional assistance. However, I am sure you will understand the reasons which dictated the action I took.

My suggestion to Father Forrester was that he return to his Abbey upon leaving the Seattle area but I have no real confidence that he will do so. Nonetheless, since he is a monk under your jurisdiction, I think it important that I relate this whole story to you so that you can be prepared to deal with Father in the event that he does return to the Abbey. At this writing, I have no idea of where he can be reached but if and when I do find out, I will forward that information to you in case you should want to contact him.

I will not be at all surprised if he should decide to leave the priestly ministry as a result of this episode although I did try my best to convince him that he really should seek professional help for himself. As you know, he is not without pastoral skills and with some indepth therapy over a period of time, he might be able to return to doing some type of priestly work in another area. This would be my hope, of course, but as I indicated above, I have little confidence that this will in fact happen.

If you would like to pursue this matter any further, feel free to get in touch with me and I will try to furnish you with further details.

With all good wishes, I am

Faternally yours in Christ,

Raymond G. Hunthausen
Archbishop of Seattle