

September 10, 1964

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Most Reverend and dear Bishop:

In the heavy rush of our life here, please pardon the delay in getting the answers off to you.

In the first instance may we say that we have been deeply edified by your personal interest in helping priests who are caught in this particular dilemma. I will try to make my answers brief.

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1. I myself in an audience I was privileged to have with His Holiness, Pope Paul, spoke of this matter which undoubtedly has been one of the deep concerns of his fatherly soul. As a matter of fact, we had in mind--where there was no other diriment impediment--a sanatio accomplished in the internal forum and permitting the de facto civil marriage to take over with, however, a permanent life cessation of the exercise of the priesthood.

2. I am certain there is a secret directive to Bishops permitting--under what conditions I know not--something along these lines. I surmise it is so new a development that Bishops have been slow to exercise it.

3. The gravest objection has seemed to stem from the fear of a landslide. But personally--and we here are in a position to know a good deal more than many others on these matters--I am convinced that since it takes greater unselfishness to find abiding happiness in marriage than under the discipline of Holy Orders, that very quickly priests who had taken advantage of the new discipline would say almost universally to others consulting them ante, factum: "In God's name, don't be a fool." It is the selfish man who leaves the priesthood and normally the selfish man is permanently unhappy.

4. May I take this occasion, Your Excellency, to bring to your attention what is a growing concern to many of us here in the States. When I was ordained, forty-three years ago,

homosexuality was a practically unknown rarity. Today it is-- in the wake of World War II--rampant among men. And whereas seventeen years ago eight out of ten problems here would represent the alcoholic, now in the last year or so our admission ratio would be approximately 5-2-3: five being alcoholics; two would be what we call "heart cases" (natural affection towards women); and three representing aberrations involving homosexuality. More alarming still is that among these of the 3 out of 10 class, 2 out of 3 have been young priests.

C I mention this because it would seem in America at least this type of problem is more devastating to the good standing of the priesthood than anything else. It is very infectuous and the prognosis for recovery extremely unfavorable. The majority of psychiatrists, physicians, and experienced priests are not sanguine of permanent recovery. Therefore it would seem that more careful screening--especially the study of family background and personal motivation--is definitely in order.

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Bishops do not quote me because this is given you in strictest confidence, but we know of several seminaries that have been deeply infected and this of course leads to a wide infection. Therefore there should be a very strict discipline of dismissal and a very clear and printed teaching in the moral theology course that mutual masturbation is a mortal sin. Priests develop a blind-spot on this matter which in my opinion involves very likely the fixation of impenitence. Seldom will you find these men evidencing consciousness of the gravity of what they have done. And this apparently is reflected in the strange attitude of Bishops who place these men after reactivation in assignments where they are most exposed to a recurrence of a vicious habit which the majority of experts consider practically incurable.

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