

JAMES SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

July 2, 1970

George B. Cardinal Flahiff, C.S.B., D.D.
Archbishop of Winnipeg
The Archbishop's Office
50 Stafford Street
Winnipeg 9, Manitoba

Your Eminence:

My sincere apologies for the long delay in replying to your very kind letter of April 29, 1970. This delay was due to my inability to have the courage to take pen in hand and write to you. I suppose it was a lack of humility on my part. However, I just did not know where or how to begin a letter to you. At the time your letter arrived I had just completed a psychological evaluation, a physical examination and had my first psychiatric interview. I was filled with ambivalent feelings and thoughts and to be very truthful was not able to express my thoughts clearly. The acute stage of anxiety which brought on the nervous breakdown and the difficulty which arose left me in a state in which I was unable to function mentally and physically.

Another reason for the hesitation in answering your letter was that I myself did not know where I stood with Lansing, Detroit or Winnipeg. When the breakdown occurred and the situation arose Bishop Zaleski's intention was that I return to you. However, I didn't feel as though I could do that because of the reasons of health which caused me to leave the Archdiocese of Winnipeg in October of 1968. As a result, Father James S. Sullivan, the Vice-Chancellor of Lansing, suggested that I find a place to stay where I could have peace and quiet for the time being in order to allow myself to calm down and view things more objectively.

At my request and in my presence he called Father Emery Petho, the pastor of St. Mary's Burnside Church in North Branch, Michigan asking if I could go there temporarily. Father Petho most generously agreed to take me for the time being. It was necessary for Father Sullivan to obtain faculties for me from Detroit because he thought I should continue to function as a priest. He thereupon called or contacted Bishop Thomas Gumbelton, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit (a friend of Father Sullivan's) and the Bishop agreed to allow me to stay with Father Petho for the present providing that I seek psychiatric help in

SERVANTS-4196

Via Coeli

MONASTERY OF THE SERVANTS OF THE PARACLETE

OFFICE OF THE SERVANT GENERAL

Lomez Springs, New Mexico

near future. The communication between Bishop Gumbleton and Father Sullivan of Lansing was personal and secretive. Bishop Gumbleton agreed to the matter and granted me faculties until April 4, 1970 at which time I was to see him personally if I was to remain with Father Petho beyond that date. No one else in Detroit knew I was with Father Petho. Bishop Gumbleton was informed so that he would know the circumstances of the situation.

I spent three weeks with Father Petho in his rural parish, from March 3 to the 25th. After much prayer and thought and on my own initiative I wrote to Via Coeli for professional help. This was a short time after I arrived at Father Petho's. Father Tobin responded to my letter immediately upon its receipt via telephone and informed me that I could come to Via Coeli. He was not able to accommodate me until March 30th.

I did not seek entry into the Archdiocese of Detroit but merely went to stay with Father Petho because of our friendship and to have time to make a proper decision. I came to Via Coeli entirely upon my own initiative. No one suggested that I go to Via Coeli. I had heard of Via Coeli some years ago and I thought that this would be the best move for me. It was a difficult decision since I did not come here under the sponsorship of anyone. No one in Lansing or Detroit suggested that I come to Via Coeli - the decision was made entirely by myself in the hope that I could receive the necessary professional help which I needed.

Father Tobin mentioned yesterday that he had heard from you and spoke of the agreement you had reached concerning my presence at Via Coeli. I am deeply grateful to your Eminence and the Archdiocese for the interest and desire to help in this situation.

My family and relatives and friends are not aware of this situation or where I am located at present. They merely have been informed that I had a nervous breakdown and have gone away for treatment. Father Sullivan in Lansing, Bishop Gumbleton in Detroit and Father Petho and Father John M. Fackler (a former pastor of mine in Jackson) know the details of the breakdown and where I am at present. I have been advised not to reveal the circumstances or my whereabouts to anyone outside of the above mentioned persons. I have been told by Father Petho that the situation was not too public and he felt it wise for me to quietly work at restoring my mental and physical health.

Therefore, your Eminence, I would very much appreciate it if the details of this situation and my location ^{be kept a}

SERVANTS -4197

Via Caeli

MONASTERY OF THE SERVANTS OF THE PARACLETE

OFFICE OF THE SERVANT GENERAL

Jemez Springs, New Mexico

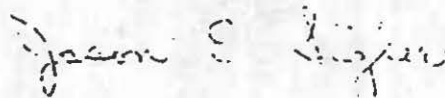
secret. Some of my relatives have attempted to locate me through Fathers Fackler and Petho. Someone might have the impudence to call or write to you or your Chancery about me. Should this happen I would be grateful if no information whatsoever be released to them. Perhaps friends in Winnipeg might enquire about me also. The statement that you know nothing about me would be appreciated. My foster parents, Mr. & Mrs. LaFountain have Father Fackler as the channel of information regarding me. Father Fackler can be reached by them if it should become necessary to contact me.

The situation looks very hopeful at present. The psychiatrist seems to indicate that the resulting situation was merely the result of a deeply entrenched anxiety state. He does not feel that the situation which developed was the main problem but that the anxiety state resulted (and the mental and physical exhaustion also resulted) in a nervous breakdown. The nervous breakdown rapidly resulted in an inability to function.

In closing may I again apologize to your Eminence for not writing and replying much sooner to your communication of April 29, 1970. I assure you that it was not deliberate. I just found that I couldn't contact you for the many reasons mentioned in this letter mainly because I did not know the situation or my standing.

Please keep me and my mental and physical health in your prayers.

Respectfully yours in Christ,



Father Jason E. Sigler

WIN 0096

SERVANTS -4198