

Mr. Janssen

KENRICK SEMINARY

7800 KENRICK ROAD

SAINT LOUIS, MO

March 26, 1948

Most Rev. Ralph Leo Hayes, D.D.
1430 Clay Street
Davenport, Iowa

Dear Bishop Hayes,

Permit me first of all to introduce myself. I am the Director of Students of Kenrick Seminary, and by virtue of my office charged with the direction of the discipline within the seminary. Fulfillment of this office, as you well know, entails close observation of each student for the purpose of determining his fitness for the Sacred Order of Priesthood.

What I write here concerns a former student, the recently ordained Reverend James Janssen. What I write is written in a spirit of charity to protect Father Janssen from himself, to safeguard the Priesthood, and for possible assistance to you if you should care to make use of what I say.

The Very Reverend Rector under date of March 13, 1948, stated in a letter to you the following: "Mr. JANSSEN, the Faculty feels, should be put with an understanding pastor who will bring him through the early years of his priesthood safe from such things as getting in a rut and not doing his best from the very first." What has been expressed to me since Father Janssen's departure verifies this recommendation.

Since his departure I have learned that Father Janssen, as a student, thoroughly disliked Kenrick Seminary. This may have been intimated to me in his statement on one occasion that he did not believe the students thought for themselves. Therefore it is a possibility that he may dislike an assignment which would call for subjection to authority and which would be a restriction on a free expression of one's individuality.

He had extremely few friends among the 200 students, and among his own classmates, who numbered fifty-eight, he had no close friend. This might indicate a very decided lack of sociability, and might prove detrimental in his priestly life's work.

Some students were fearful that on occasions his action would bring sanctions on the student body and more principally was this true among his own classmates. This could indicate a lack of regard for the welfare of his fellow priests in their observance of clerical discipline and regulations.

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He did not have a grasp of possible consequences from some of his actions, and this to me indicates a precipitancy and thoughtlessness in acting which could possibly have serious consequences. One such action, made known to me only after his departure, ~~which~~ if known beforehand, could have had decidedly serious consequences for the person himself. It was reported to me since his leaving, and I intend to verify it thoroughly before determining my action in relation to the student body. If it is verified and the student body suffers, then Father Janssen can take the credit!

My experiences with Father Janssen as a student were not without their unpleasant incidents. But in all of them it seemed to me that, as a student, Father Janssen was acting as one short of maturity, and as one who had something of the juvenile in his character. On occasions of admonition, he, in so many words, expressed himself as being unaware of any fault having been committed - innocence personified - and also expressed a "sincere" desire for correction. My thought since his departure, and in view of what has since been told to me, has been: How much of what I judged to be simplicity was in fact a dangerous spirit of duplicity with all its consequences?

Lest I be judged guilty of unfairness the following should be noted. On the point of attendance at classes and religious exercises Father Janssen as a student was without blame. With regard to regularity there was little if any fault to find. He, to all appearances, could apply himself with good results when he chose to do so. Although he was the last to give a recitation of the Mass prayers, yet when he did recite them, the recitation was acceptable indeed. His actual Mass practice for examination was above average. Exteriorly he was respectful of authority. In the matter of social graces he is somewhat deficient.

I repeat, Your Excellency, this has been written in a spirit of fraternal charity; it has been read by the Very Reverend Rector. Your Excellency will know best how to treat the contents of this letter, and my sincere and humble prayer is that we have not made a mistake.

With sincere best wishes to Your Excellency during the present holy season, and humbly asking your blessing that I may ever prove worthy of the trust confided to me, I beg to remain,

Your humble servant,



Marion E. Gibbons, C.M.
Director of Students