

St. Anne Church
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ARCHDIOCESE OF BOSTON
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Rev. John McCormick
Archdiocese of Boston
2121 Commonwealth Avenue
Brighton, MA 02135

Dear Jack:

Welcome back from Bangkok. Thank you for your letters of June 5 and October 25, 1990. You mentioned that you would "try to obtain an exception" if I "could not afford medication". That was not the problem. The problem is you need a doctor to write the damn prescription. It was the doctor I could not afford. Contrary to medical advice and the Cardinal's agreement and your good offices and Bishop Banks' assurances I have had to return to work to raise money to pay for an allergy doctor.

It is a revelation to learn that even a Cardinal cannot always get his way nor his Vicar for Administration nor his Vicar for Personnel nor all three in concert. Having sent me to a "warm, dry climate to work on those allergies", nine months have elapsed and the allergies are worse than ever. Some times my eyes are so irritated by allergies that I can no longer read to prepare homilies. At least in Boston I had access to a doctor and therefore to prescriptions for medication.

Bishop Banks assured me there would be no need to work if I was on medical leave. "All your needs will be cared for." Except you cannot see an allergy doctor, you cannot get a prescription, you cannot get medication, and as a consequence the allergies drain into the jaw and I end up with a dentist and an oral surgeon angry at me for seemingly precipitating the problem by neglecting the allergies. To add insult to injury the Archdiocese won't pay their dental bill either. And to top it all off the allergies are degenerating into

Coachella Valley lung specialists say they think the greatest risk is posed by patients who aren't taking proper care of themselves. "...have a false confidence in self-treating and wait until it's too late to seek help when they develop problems." To place a sixty year old man on medical leave after thirty years of ministry and then refuse to pay for the medical assistance he requires is less than I would have expected from the Archdiocese, is counterproductive, is pennywise and pound foolish. Nickle and diming an already beleaguered priest is hardly conducive to his recuperation nor is it ever cost-effective if that is the underlying motive. This is turning a nightmare of stress and tension and debt forcing me to take out loans and take on jobs; it is depressing, demoralizing, and defeating the purpose of the Cardinal, Bishop Banks, yourself and my medical leave of absence.

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I do not expect you to do anything about all this, Jack. I know you are well intentioned and on my side, but powerless before the bureaucratic juggernaut.

Nor do I want an "exception" made for me. What I have asked for was just and reasonable and wise. What I have received is stingy and misguided. Perhaps it's only what some people think I deserve for refusing to sign the immoral oath. Well do I remember seminary professors who gave "moral marks".

"A Monsignor Hart from Boston" corresponded with a hospital chaplain out here who warned my previous pastor who in turn warned my present pastor that he should not hire me. Thus the meagre income by which I had hoped to pay for an allergy doctor is jeopardized.

You solicited my thoughts about returning to Boston. The spectre of explaining to a new parish "the oath" with its consequent media barrage churns my stomach. I cannot be a pastor because I cannot take the oath. I cannot be a parochial vicar because I spent twenty-five years digging myself out of that pit. In any case, what pastor or cook would want a parochial vicar with a severely limited diet who requires a dust free, non-smoking, rectory?

I had the best parish in the Archdiocese. If I came back I would fight to get the second best parish and would refuse the oath thus precipitating a public battle that would surely upset my precarious balance of health and you would have a useless, sick priest and one large headache.

I want to stay here until I can come back and be a healthy pastor.

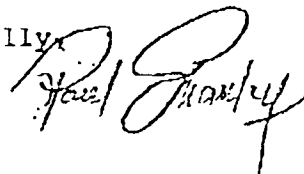
Some days all I can do is light reading. Whatever my malaise, medicine has been unable to find a physical cause. In any case it is incapacitating.

My apprehension over what the Archdiocese will do with me has, I am sure, exacerbated my condition and I find myself too ill to work.

For all these reasons and more I feel it is unwise for me to return to Boston and urge you to seek a year's extension of my sick leave, this time finding a way to give me access to an allergy doctor.

I am sorry about Sister Catherine's death since I know she was your close collaborator and friend.

Faternally,



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Would you be kind enough to refer the bills to Fred Rumm?