

Annunciation Rectory
Dartmouth, Massachusetts

REGISTERED MAIL - SPECIAL DELIVERY

PERSONAL

17 January 1970

Archdiocesan Personnel Office
Chancery Building
2121 Commonwealth Avenue
Brighton, Mass, 02135
Attn: Rev. John J.

Dear Father:

I write you concerning a Brother Priest, about whom I had phoned you for advise on two occasions (around last Thanksgiving and again, on last Tuesday morning). You recall that our telephone conversations did not identify the Priest.

The problem presented was one of a "rumor of possible homosexuality" - and the rumor concerns Father Joseph E. Birmingham (class of 1960), presently stationed at St. James' Parish in Salem. The reason why I bring this name to your attention now will become apparent as I spell out my knowledge of the case, and the action I have taken regarding it.

The rumor first came to my attention around Thanksgiving time by way of a St. James' parishioner. This man indicated that the rumor was knowledgeable among the youngsters (boys and girls) at St. James' School, and among some of the parents. He also indicated that the problem surfaced about two years ago - but subsided shortly thereafter.

Having heard this, I phoned you to find out if Personnel Office had any definite mode of action in such cases. We deliberately refrained from identification of priest involved. Following our conversation, I visited Father Birmingham in his Rectory, indicated the existence of this rumor, and pointed out the following: He would either have to trace the rumor out and put an end to it - or, in the event that the rumor had any foundation in fact, he should consult with a psychiatrist. I offered my own service in making contact with a psychiatrist for him, should he feel that this would make things easier for him. As I expected, he denied any foundation in fact, and assured me that he would study the matter thoroughly.

Last Monday night (12 January), Sister Superior of St. James' School phoned me. She had been visited by my informant's wife and one/or several other wives. (It was from the informant's wife that she learned that the subject was discussed with me some 5 or 6 weeks previously). Sister was deeply troubled, felt that she had an obligation to act, and didn't quite know where to turn. I scheduled a meeting at her convent on Tuesday morning, and discussed the matter with her and another Sister for about an hour and a half. Her "research" seems to point out that the rumor is founded on fact s - and that these facts have occurred

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even since I spoke to Father Birmingham at Thanksgiving time - indeed, as recent as within the past two weeks. I suggested that, on behalf of the Sister, and in view of the fact that I had been earlier approached on the subject, I would discuss the matter with the Pastor of St. James' Parish.

It was at this time that I made my second phone call to you, and pointed out my intended visit to the Pastor. Again, no names were mentioned. In our conversation it came out that, since you are presently working on a list of proposed transfers to become effective within the next few weeks, it would be also possible to transfer the priest in question - as a normal routine matter - if his name were presented to you. I felt that such a presentation should come from the Pastor, rather than from me.

My visit to the Pastor took place Tuesday afternoon. I told him what I have just spelled out above. The Pastor indicated that he would send a letter immediately to the Personnel Office, requesting a transfer of Father Birmingham - feeling that, as I do, Father's effectiveness in the Parish would decline in proportion as the rumor may spread. All the more reason for a transfer if the rumor proved true in fact.

And so, the matter stands. No doubt the Pastor's letter has already reached your Office. For this reason, I mention the name of the subject-priest - so that you can identify my phone calls with the Pastor's letter. It will also give you an up-to-date survey of what I have tried to do in this case. I feel that I am not betraying Father Birmingham since I had confronted him first with the situation - and now that several weeks have passed, the situation does not appear controlled.

Inasmuch as the Sisters, and the parents mentioned above, look upon the situation as one of extreme urgency, I feel that there was no other alternative but to visit the Pastor, and to follow up that visit with this letter to you. The possibility of re-visiting Father Birmingham is impossible at present - nor could I schedule another meeting with him within the next week and a half.

Trusting that the above will be of help to you in helping Father Birmingham, I am

Respectfully

Rev Patrick J Kelly

Copy to:

Reverend Pastor, St. James' Church, Salem.

P.S. For your information, Father Matthias, OFM, of the Formation Center in Andover is also acquainted with the situation and has discussed the subject with me.

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