

Your Excellency.

It is late to be writing to you about an incident that happened in early July - but back then we never thought it would become necessary to go this length.

We are members of St. Mark's parish and have recounted the story to Monsignor Billigan, who expressed his regrets and said he would contact you in the matter, and may have done so by now, but we want to expedite it by putting it to paper. We hope not to offend Monsignor in writing you, but feel such a sense of urgency about it that we must be done with it.

About the last week in ^{we were visited by} June of Father Jerome Kern of St. Mark's parish. The visit seemed routine enough - Father had met Mr. He Tomaker & some of our children a few Sundays previous, on the occasion of the leave-taking of Father Sexton & Kelly. Father

Kern expressed an interest in stopping to see us & was encouraged to do so.

He met our five children that day - none of whom attend St. Marks - and we did some piano-playing & singing, which Father seemed to enjoy.

On a very hot Thursday or Friday of 4th of July week, Father Kern telephoned, spoke to Mr. Hentmoker and asked if he might take some of our children swimming with him. My husband rounded up 2 of our children and 2 of their friends - our son, James, 14, a freshman at Cretin this fall, his friend, Charles Turney, 13; our daughter, Susan and her little girl friend, 12.

On returning home that evening, our daughter was gushing with enthusiasm, and our son was very quiet. Late in the evening, his older sister heard James & his friend Charles talking & suggested to Mr. Hentmoker that he should

talk to Jamie. He did, and he heard, sadly, in bits & pieces, the following account of the afternoon:

Explaining that the beaches with life guards were too crowded Father took them to a private spot not marked for swimming at Lake Nokomis. The two girls were happily left to swim by themselves, largely ignored - and Father devoted most of the afternoon to wrestling with the boys. On land, he would straddle my son, dare him to "pin" him. But in the water, it was another kind of wrestling - in the deep water Father's hand slipped under Jamie's suit and over his genital area - after which the boy spent most of his time trying to avoid him. Three or four other times, Father's hand slipped into the trunks onto the abdomen, but Jamie said he'd squirm away, or, as he showed us, shake Father's arm

away & pull it out. He pleaded a cold & tried to rest on the beach & Father would drag him by the neck out into the water again, or straddled on land. There was one grab by Father on the outside of his trunks, but Jemir says that really called Louie happened accidentally so he thought there was nothing ulterior in that one instance.

His friend, Charles, - he had one chance out in the water alone to compare notes. Charles had had the same thing happen to him - he's a husky little guy and his clothes fit him tightly - only Charles had on jeans, cut off, a belt and undershorts. In the course of "wrestling" Father's hand had slipped inside & over Charles' genital organs. He is a stronger swimmer & he spent all his time way out in deep water after the incident trying to keep

So, Jamie, who wasn't a strong swimmer, stayed on the beach with his "cold," said he couldn't look at Father's face anymore when he straddled him & thought seriously of gathering his young sister & her friend & just walking off.

His sister, who had to be told something after that day, cause she said Father had said after his vacation he would take them again, cried out when we told her something of the problem, "Oh, mother, if only you'd seen poor Jamie trying to come in and Father taking him by the neck and carrying him off into the water again! She also said when Jamie would lie on his towel & cover his eyes, Father would move his towel over next to him. She finally understood why, when they bath came in the house after being dropped

off, when she said "Wasn't Father nice?!", he'd answered, "Oh, yeah!" So ended an afternoon's ordeal for our son and his friend.

After he'd poured it out to us - our ordeal began. The disillusionment, the delicacy of the matter, the position of the man in the Church, the necessity to be sure of what had happened that day - we proceeded cautiously.

What followed is too detailed to get into a letter. An insult to our intelligence - Father Kerr's attempt to explain away the incident. He'd had a three-week vacation by then; and though he's known for his excellent memory, it failed him completely on the events of that day. Mrs. Jennings and both of us were not to him, indignant and, I'm sure, offensive. He never took umbrage, never expressed sorrow for the boys, & he

rather than if we would allow ourselves to "get to know" him & what he thinks, (let the boys go swimming again with him) he could make us understand.

He did not deny the incident.

He is a very strange man. Before that evening, I think our hope was that he would be most regretful and offer to seek help for himself.

In the three long months that followed, we carried this secret burden with us, to one priest, and another. We received regrets, advice, and, because of the type of incident, a reluctance to deal with it. It is a most unpleasant matter. We could leave him to Heaven, or call in the civil authorities, and we be seriously considered both.

Father Kern has, in spite of knowing our feelings, called us over to invite to join his Adult Education Class & sent us the enclosed letter, and

continues to behave as if our
problem is insufficient knowledge
of him. The truth is we have
all the knowledge of him we
want and more.

Our sensibilities are assaulted
at the sight of him dispensing
the Eucharist, we try to miss
his arrogant sermons, his affront
in badgering us to "get together"
is becoming intolerable. Not
the least consideration to our
minds, is the welfare of the
children of the parish - we would
not wish them to experience
what our son has.

We know there is no
address for our son - but your
earliest possible attention
to the matter would give us
some small solace.

Sincerely,

Mr. & Mrs. J. B. Heutman
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