Everyone agrees there is a crisis in the priesthood and in the religious life. Not everyone, however, realizes that this crisis, more frequently than not, is an expression of emotional underdevelopment or emotional illness—severe in some and moderate to slight in others. It is more than a state of present or future shock, yet not a hopeless one. However, not everyone knows how to give an affirming hand—but we do!

It is our purpose at the House of Affirmation to provide an opportunity for self-discovery, emotional growth and cure through the contemporary approaches of psychology/psychiatry in dialogue with recent theological developments. Such is realized through a three-fold program: Service, Education and Research. It is our hope at the House of Affirmation to help the individual to become a fully human, consistently free person within the context of the ecclesial calling and in relationship to society.

At the House of Affirmation we are not satisfied merely with restoring people to their former level of usefulness in the community. We want to go beyond utilitarian criteria of adjustment and assist the persons who come to us in attaining a level of happiness commensurate with their potentials.

The basic foundation of our therapeutic community, Affirmation, if it is to be authentic, is much more than speaking a word of encouragement or the giving of a compliment. It focuses on the very being of the other, on his goodness as a unique human being. It presupposes openness, confident expectation and uninterrupted attention to everything that happens in the other, to all he is not able to express and to all the anticipated good within him, even though the other himself is still unsuspecting of that future good.
The House of Affirmation is a direct outgrowth, broadened in scope, of the Consulting Center for Clergy and Religious of the Diocese of Worcester, established as a result of a request by the Senate of Religious to Auxiliary Bishop, Most Reverend Timothy J. Harrington. It was initiated in 1970 under the sponsorship of the Bishop of Worcester, Most Reverend Bernard J. Flanagan, D.D., and founded by Sister Anna Polcino, S.C.M.M., M.D., psychiatrist. Through her tireless efforts and professional skills, and those of Reverend Thomas A. Kane, Ph.D., psychologist, the new project received an immediate and enthusiastic response from clergy and religious, not only from the Diocese of Worcester but throughout the United States.

Sister Anna Polcino, M.D., and Reverend Thomas A. Kane, Ph.D., became familiar with the scientific writings of Conrad W. Baars, M.D. and Anna A. Terruwe, M.D., and shared the authors' disenchantment with certain facets of psychoanalytic philosophy and therapy. In April 1972, Doctor Baars was invited to lecture in Worcester at the Consulting Center's "Second Annual Psychotheological Institute for Priests and Religious." On this occasion, Sister Polcino, Father Kane, and Doctor Baars agreed on the existing need for a total residential therapeutic and educational program for religious professionals. Thus began the expanded House of Affirmation concept.

"A SPECIAL GIFT TO THE CHURCH"

Pope Paul VI

The House of Affirmation utilizes the philosophical concepts and the result-proven clinical applications of two internationally esteemed psychiatrists, Anna A. Terruwe, M.D., and Conrad W. Baars, M.D., described in their penetrating study, Loving and Curing the Neurotic, Arlington House, New Rochelle, N. Y. © 1972. In 1971 Doctors Terruwe and Baars were both consultants on the problems of the priesthood at the Vatican Synod of Bishops.

They presented to Synod members the results of their clinical observations from a combined total experience of forty years' practice involving 15,000 patients in North America and Europe. Their presentation to the Bishops addressed itself to the causes, treatment, and prevention of emotional immaturity and illness in priests and religious. His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, has called their work "a special gift to the Church."

It is this "special gift" the House of Affirmation offers directly to clergy and religious and indirectly to all the People of God. Doctor Baars will be associated with Sister Anna Polcino, M.D., psychiatrist, and Reverend Thomas A. Kane, Ph.D., psychologist, and a supporting staff together with an Advisory Board chosen for excellence and suitability from the varied professions, disciplines, and skills needed to accomplish the goals and objectives of the House of Affirmation.
RESIDENTIAL HOUSE NEEDED

Having incorporated and definitely planned for the opening of the House of Affirmation, a location was sought for the residential center. At this time, the Lasell Ecumenical Retreat House in Whitinsville, Massachusetts was brought to the attention of the founding staff. This building and property are ideal for our therapeutic community. A many-gabled home is surrounded by eleven acres of gardens, lawns and wooded areas. Located in Central Massachusetts, it is easily accessible by all means of transportation. The spaciousness of the grounds provide an atmosphere of peace, physical rest and spiritual refreshment.

The Right Reverend Alexander D. Stewart, Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts, owner of the Lasell Ecumenical Retreat House encouraged the founders of the House of Affirmation by accepting a position on the Advisory Board and offering the Lasell property and building at a minimal cost. Bishop Stewart stated that he saw the need for such a Christian enterprise, and he would hope that a minimal purchase price would help to bring about the immediate realization of this project. Thus, the House of Affirmation now has a location for its unique apostolate for clergy and religious. Not only will the staff respond to residential needs but other services will include out-patient psychotherapy, career development, group-process communication labs, candidate assessment for priesthood and religious life, and facilities where professionals in theology, psychiatry and philosophy can meet to dialogue.
RESIDENTIAL PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Rev. Thomas A. Kane, M.A., S.T.M., Ph.D., D.P.S.,
Executive Director — House of Affirmation


Sister Anna Polcino, S.C.M.M., M.D.,
Psychiatric Director of Therapy — House of Affirmation

Conrad W. Baars, M.D.,
Psychiatric Director of Education and Research —
House of Affirmation

Medical Degree, Amsterdam University Medical School. Post-graduate work. Oxford, England and
Delft University, Netherlands. In prison for two
years in Buchenwald for aiding downed Allied fliers.
Received Croix du Combattant de l'Europe. Captain,
U. S. Army Medical Corps during Korean conflict.
Director of Psychiatric Education, Rochester
State Hospital before entering private practice in
Rochester, Minn. in 1960. Psychotherapist. Guest
House Sanitarium for Alcoholic Priests. Psychiatric
Consultant to 1971 Vatican Synod of Bishops.
Advisor to Rome on Alcoholism in clergy and
religious. Member AMA, APA. ASCH, and other
professional organizations. Guest lecturer. Institute
of Catholic Thought, Dubuque, Iowa. Institute of
Spirituality, Dover, Mass. and the Institute of
Spiritual Theology, River Forest, Illinois. Translator,
lecturer, and contributor to New Catholic Encyclo-
pedia and Direct Psychotherapy. Author of numer-
ous professional articles and books, e.g., Thomas
Aquinas and Cure of the Obsessive-Compulsive
Neurotic. The Alcoholic Priest. Psychology of
Obedience. Sex. Love, and the Life of the Spirit;
Loving and Curing the Neurotic. A Priest for All
Seasons — Masculine and Celibate. Prevention and
Treatment of Crisis in the Priesthood, and others.
Listed in the American Catholic’s Who's Who,
Who's Who in the Midwest, and Dictionary of
International Biography. Director of Minnesota
Citizens Concerned for Life. Dr. Baars is married
and has one son and two daughters.

“AMOR EDIFICAT” (1 Cor. 8:1)
“Love builds a house” . . . a house for clergy
and religious, where they can find their
identity, happiness, and an abundance of life
in our affirming love.

VATICAN CITY
November 21, 1972

My dear friend in Christ,

I write this communication in reference to
the newly organized House of Affirmation,
Inc., International Therapeutic Center for
Clergy and Religious . . .

The founding members and professional
staff of the treatment center are: Conrad W.
Baars, M.D., psychiatrist, Sister Anna Polcino,
S.C.M.M., M.D., psychiatrist, and Reverend
Thomas A. Kane, M.A., S.T.M., Ph.D.,
psychologist. All three persons are personally
know to me as objective, competent, serious
and dedicated professionals whose work I have
followed with keen interest. . .

On the basis of Doctor Baars’ experience,
professional competence and personal integ-
rity, I can commend this project most enthusi-
astically; moreover, his colleagues have been
among the most dedicated and competent of
my own associates in pastoral and community
work in years gone by.

The purpose of the House of Affirmation is
to promote expert psychiatric treatment for
emotionally ill clergy and religious throughout
the western world. Its need is beyond any
doubt considerable and urgent. . .

John Cardinal Wright,
Prefect. Congregation for the Clergy
Office of the Bishop  
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609  
December 22, 1972  

Dear Father Kane,  

I am pleased to accept membership on the Board of Directors of House of Affirmation, Inc. and to contribute whatever support I can to the project. I am convinced that there is a growing need and demand for the kind of therapy which the Center, with a professionally competent staff, will be able to offer to priests and religious. With you, Doctor Baars and Sister Anna Polcino to head the project, I am confident that it is in good hands, and join with all of you in a prayer that it will merit the wide support which it deserves.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
Bernard J. Flanagan  
Bishop of Worcester, Massachusetts

"Throughout the ages it has been not so much the Church as a whole, but rather a relatively few of her members, her most sainted, yet at the same time, her most truly human members, who precisely because they were so human in the best sense of the word, were able to live the words of Christ, 'I came to bring you life, that you may have it more abundantly.' Francis of Assisi, Damien the leper, John XXIII, and Mother Teresa are some of those fully grown people capable of giving abundant life to others! But in our day, the People of God, priests and religious included, suffer so acutely in their need for identity, self-worth, self-love and being loved that the Church must learn the life-giving "secret" of a Francis, a Damien, a John and a Teresa, and share it with all. Now, not later!"

C. W. Baars, Psychiatric Consultant to 1971 Vatican Synod of Bishops

GIVE ME YOUR HAND . . .

You, too, can affirm priests and religious in need during this critical moment of history! You can join hands with the professional men and women — laity, clergy, religious — who are responding to this contemporary issue of Church and society. Without your hand, the healing process is impossible!

Father Thomas Kane, Sister Anna Polcino, and Doctor Conrad Baars need help: your prayers, your personal involvement, your financial assistance. The need for the House of Affirmation — International Therapeutic Center for Clergy and Religious has already been significantly demonstrated. Many clergy and religious — of all faiths — are awaiting the opening of the House of Affirmation. The Professional Staff will be able to respond once the necessary money is raised to renovate and furnish the building so graciously offered by the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts. Funds are also needed to assist those clergy and religious who do not have adequate financial resources to benefit from the House of Affirmation services. We need donations to assist with providing adequate consultation, medical, and physiotherapy rooms.

Chapel, vestments, kitchen, library and many other needs can be realized only if there is a generous response from the Christian community and other interested persons. A priority in funding must go to our "scholarship fund" so as to offer the opportunity for clergy, religious, physicians, psychologists, seminarians, and others who wish to come to the House of Affirmation to study our specific theoretical and therapeutic approaches. Your continued generous interest in regard to the financial needs of the House of Affirmation is essential to the success of this unique apostolate.

"In order to assist the adequate operation of the House of Affirmation at present and in
years to come, I consider it very desirable that this project receive from you a substantial form of assistance. All contributions are tax-deductible and should be made to the House of Affirmation, 201 Salisbury Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, 01609."

John Cardinal Wright
Vatican City, 10/21/72

Without your help the House of Affirmation can’t exist. Give us your hand... so we can give ours to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

A memorial book will be placed in the lobby of the House of Affirmation listing all those who have contributed to assist this apostolate. A special memorial plaque will have inscribed the names of all those who donate $1,000 or more. Grants are actively sought from funding institutions. Tax deductible contributions are sought from interested corporations and individuals. No gift is too small. All are asked to pray for the success of the House of Affirmation. We welcome your participation.

"Always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." (Ephesians 5:20)
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