

Confidential Report to Bishop Pelotte - 3/18/89

In 1974 I heard the confession of a 16-year old boy. The matter was very serious, and had made a profound negative impact on him. Subsequently, the boy came to me several times for counselling relating to the same matter. I was concerned for his spiritual and psychological well-being, and especially that there be no lasting wounds in his relationship to God, to the Church or to priests. Over the years he and I have developed a close personal friendship. From time to time while he was in college he would allude to the matter of the confession, and we talked about it at length at least once while he was in college.

Upon graduating from college in 1980, he was hired by an international computer-parts manufacturer, with whom he is still employed. He has a successful career, is at the junior-executive level, and at this time is probably earning between \$50,000.00 and \$70,000.00 a year. He was married in the Church, and he and his wife are expecting their second child. Their marriage is a strong one. I last saw him about six months ago, when I stayed overnight with him and his family in the Phoenix area.

Last Wednesday night (3/15/89) he called me, and after some preliminary conversation indicated to me that there was a purpose to the call. He thereupon began to read to me a statement which he had written out shortly before the phone call. As nearly as I can recall the various points made, they were as follows:

- The matter which he had first talked to me about in 1974 was still bothering him, and, as far as he is concerned, has never really been resolved. He feels an "empty place" in an otherwise happy life, and wonders how different a person he might now be if he had not had this experience.

- The most troublesome factor to him was that a certain priest had never been brought to account over what had happened. He bears a great animosity towards this priest.

- He has reason to believe that there have been others victimized as he was, and strongly feels that something must be done to protect future potential victims.

- He has decided that something must be done in order to resolve this once and for all. He wanted to inform me of his intentions, "more as a friend than as a priest", because of the likelihood of "lawyers and the media" being involved in what he plans to do, and of my name being brought into the case as the priest he first turned to.

- He is committed to the Church, but feels that "this type of thing" is so widespread (he understands that as many as 5% of the clergy may be involved in similar activity), that it is his responsibility to do something to help clean it up. He is dismayed that no action was ever taken against the individual priest.

involved in his case.

When he had finished reading the statement, I said something to the effect that when he had something important to talk about he didn't kid around. I then reminded him that the matter he had brought to me was under the seal of confession, and that I could not inform anyone because of that seal - and in fact had never discussed it with anyone other than him. I had only talked with him about it at those times when he had brought up the subject.

I then said that before he did anything in a public or civil forum on this that he should have recourse to the Bishop. He expressed scepticism as to whether Bishop Hastrich would do anything but try to cover it up. He finds it impossible to believe that over the years evidence has never been brought to the Bishop about that priest's involvement in similar activities.

[[ I know - from the priest himself - that allegations were made against him after 1974, and that the Bishop knew of them. I also have reason to believe that there was at least one other incident which resulted in the man's abrupt transfer from one parish to another, and which presumably therefore the Bishop knew of. This second episode, however, I do not have any first-hand knowledge of. I obviously did not share this information with the man who called me. ]]

He asked me why I had never encouraged him to take the matter to the Bishop. I replied that it was basically a judgment call on my part: we had talked about it for the most part during his adolescence, when my concern was his healing and normal development into manhood. I did not judge it at the time to be in his best interest to so focus his attention and energy on this one matter, when there were so many other concerns for him as he approached adulthood. I had not realized that, in spite of his overall success in making the transition to adulthood, this incident (which had in fact taken place some years before he first told me about it) had so traumatized him. His response to this was, "You still have the right answer for things, don't you?" I believe that he meant that to be taken at face value, and was not being sarcastic.

I asked him to do me one favor, as a friend: not to do anything about this until we had a chance to sit down together and talk about it. He said that would be good, if it could be done soon. I told him that the very earliest I could get down to see him would be Easter Sunday night. At first he said that that was too long, but after realizing the impossibility of his being able to come to see me before then and my being unable to get down there during Holy Week, he agreed to wait until Easter.

I asked him if he had discussed this with his wife. He said that he had, and that she supported his decision. I again assured him that I had never broached the subject with the Bishop, and that I strongly believed that he should seek redress within the Church

before "going public" - for his and his family's sake, as well as for the sake of the Church.

In setting this in writing, my prime concern is for the sanctity of the seal of confession. For that reason I cannot reveal the name of the caller, or of the priest. Whatever concrete details I have disclosed in this report have come from conversations not bound by the seal. I have disclosed no details revealed to me within the sacramental forum.

I am also very concerned about the justice of this man's claims, and about his spiritual well-being and continued commitment to the Church. I strongly advise that this matter be treated with the utmost seriousness. This man is a mature, committed Catholic. He is highly intelligent and well educated. He has the financial resources to pursue civil litigation if he judges that the Church is unwilling to do anything.

At the same time, we are talking about an alledged incident that took place a long time ago - some sixteen to twenty years (I really do not know the exact time, or how old this man was when it happened).

It is my intention to go and see him on Easter Sunday night, and spend a few days with him and his family. I would appreciate some advise and assistance in how I should approach this. It is quite clearly an extremely delicate matter, all the more so for me since it involves the seal of confession. It is my concern for the integrity of the seal that has prompted me to put this in writing; I was fearful that in an oral presentation the seal might be compromised. I have tried to be very careful in presenting the facts of the case, and feel that the above account provides the necessary information and preserves the inviolability of the sacramental forum.