

PLANNING/DISCHARGE MEETING

Reverend Jim Burns
Villa Louis Martin
November 06, 1990

PRESENT:

Most Reverend Donald Pelotte, S.S.S., D.D.

Reverend James Burns

Reverend Peter Lechner, s.P., Director

[REDACTED]

Reverend Richard Drabik, M.I.C., Spiritual Director

Reverend Clyde Landry, Co-Director of Aftercare

Reverend Neil Saller, T.O.R., Director of Aftercare

Father Burns began the meeting by giving a general summary of his background and the reasons why he came to Villa Louis Martin, as well as a summary of what he has accomplished in the program. He stated that there was a twofold reason for entering the program. First, he was accused of acting out, many years ago, with a young man.

[REDACTED] He then went on to say that he had felt for a long time that he was beyond hope as far as forgiveness and salvation were concerned. He felt that he had violated his priestly commitment to celibacy, and because of that he was unable to be forgiven. Therefore, he turned all his attention to his work and became a workaholic. He said that he worked hard for his people but ended up being an empty shell. He finally realized that he had little or nothing to give to his people because internally he was an empty shell and had no spiritual resources. He also mentioned that, because of his early seminary training in the era in which he was brought up, he had built a wall against relationships with women. He mentioned that the training at the seminary concerning sexuality was absent.

During his time in the program, he began to learn about the unconditional forgiveness of God. He began to develop a strong spiritual life. He worked on his sexuality and has come to terms with his sexuality; however, he still is unsure of his sexual orientation. While here, he learned how to handle intimacy and develop good, solid, adult relationships. He also found out that he is a person and his identification is not only with priesthood, as Father Burns, but he has also found that he needs time for Jim Burns. As a consequence of that, he has begun to develop outside interests and hobbies, and is determined to continue taking time for himself in the future.

He then discussed the assignment to the parish of St. Rose of Lima in Blanco, New Mexico. At first, he felt that there were a number of problems connected with this assignment, specifically the remote area in which it is located, and the large debt which the parish is saddled with. However, upon reflection and consultation with staff, he has

come to realize that the remote area would offer him time for other activities such as hobbies, fishing, etc.

Concerning the debt of the parish, it originally frightened him, but he came to realize that he cannot own that debt--it is not his. He intends to work with priests in the area and to join an organization for priests who are in one-man parishes. He also plans to work on exercise and diet, which he has not done so far because of the amount of work done in other problem areas. He mentioned the fact that because of the remoteness of the locality, he would need a TV dish in order to receive television broadcasts.

He mentioned then that his plans concerning aftercare included seeing Father Richard Drabik, his spiritual director, at least once a month, and continuing in individual therapy with a therapist in Farmington. He feels that he has gained a great deal of help through the VLM program, and is determined to follow through with the gains already made.

██████████ Father Burns' focal therapist, commented on his summary and said that it was a good summary of what has happened to him here. ██████████ main concern is that Father Burns continue in a balanced lifestyle. She is afraid that there is a temptation for him to isolate himself and then to work too much. She feels that he has done very good work here, and she suggests that he set up a therapy recommendation as quickly as possible.

Father Richard Drabik commented that Father Burns has worked very hard, especially in the area of spiritual development. Father Richard addressed the problem of Father Burns living in a parish alone, since the recommendation of the staff had been that he live with others. However, after Father Burns consulted with the staff and reflected upon this assignment, it then became Father Burns decision to accept the assignment. Father Richard also warned against the temptation not to follow through on therapy and spiritual direction, and urged a strong commitment to the above-stated therapeutic program. Father Richard also mentioned that Father Burns is a man of deep convictions and sense of responsibility, and that he has accomplished much spiritual gain.

██████████ then commented that Father Burns has done very well in the therapeutic process of psychodrama. She feels that he was an asset to the group and was very intuitive with the role-playing. She did say that in certain family dynamics there were some intense scenes, and Father Burns became somewhat frightened and uncomfortable and she feels that this would need further exploration in therapy. ██████████ pointed out that there is underlying anger toward authority and she feels this also should be addressed further. She feels that Father Burns will be able to realize any danger signals concerning workaholism or taking the parish debt personally upon his own shoulders, so that he would be able to avoid those danger areas. She was struck by his complete change from having been told to take the assignment, to owning the decision to accept it himself. She made one other comment that he did extremely good work in the sexuality group because of his honesty and directness.

Father Neil Saller commented that Father Burns seems to be a community person, from observations in his interactions with the men in the program. He also commented that he is well-liked and appreciated by the men, and stated that he found Father Burns to be a very pleasant and friendly asset to the community at VLM.

Father Clyde Landry also commented that Father Burns is well-respected by the men in the community here. Father Landry mentioned that he is touched by Father Burns' commitment to ministry and to the diocese. He sees a deep love for the people to whom Father Burns ministers. Father Landry said his task in the next two years would be to help, to question, and to guide Father Burns in the aftercare program.

At this point, Bishop Pelotte offered his observations, the first of which was his unawareness of the staff's concern about the assignment to Blanco. The Bishop's purpose in assigning Father Burns to the parish in Blanco was in order to give Father Burns a good parish and a respectable assignment. The Bishop agrees that the parish debt is not Father Burns' personal responsibility, and the Bishop is willing to tell the people of the parish that the debt is theirs and that it is their responsibility. In giving this assignment to Father Burns, the Bishop bypassed the normal procedures of the diocese, which call for an announcement and application for those who wish to apply. The Bishop said that this upset some of the priests in the diocese, who assumed that Father Burns would be an associate, after having been in the treatment program. Bishop Pelotte shares the concerns which were brought forth by the staff. First of all, the debt is not personal, and therefore should not be seen as a burden by Father Burns. Secondly, the concern about isolation was addressed by the Bishop, in that, there are more priests in that particular county and area than in any other area of the diocese, so that Father Burns can reach out to these priests for companionship and support. Thirdly, in the concern about spirituality, the Bishop mentioned that, in the former parish, some people remarked that Father Burns had been spiritually bankrupt, and so it is vitally important that he be able to nourish the people of Blanco spiritually. The Bishop said that the people of Blanco need to be loved, nurtured and fed, and this will be Father Burns' responsibility. The Bishop also commented that the church needs a new style of management, a more collaborative one, rather than the practice of the past, where the pastor merely laid down the law. And the Bishop hopes that Father Burns will be able to develop a more collaborative style of leadership in dealing with the people of the parish. The Bishop also agreed to a trial period of six months or so, at which time the assignment will be reevaluated, and if all is not going well for Father Burns or the parish, then another assignment will be considered. Bishop Pelotte suggested a particular therapist in Farmington, a [REDACTED] in whom he has a great deal of confidence, and hopes that an initial appointment with this therapist will be in place before Father Burns leaves Jemez Springs. [REDACTED] will contact and cooperate with [REDACTED]

Father Peter Lechner strongly urged that a definite appointment be set up with the therapist before Father Burns leaves the program. Father Peter's reason is that Father Burns will need someone with whom to confer immediately, in the event that other

accusations should surface, or that the criticism of this assignment by other priests should present a problem. It will always be of vital importance for Father Burns to be able to speak with and to have confidence in a support person as soon as any difficulty should present itself. Father Peter's reasons for immediate contact with a therapist center around possible legal problems in the future, as well as handling any criticism that might be a problem from the clergy. Father Peter also feels that to be in touch every week with a therapist will help to continue to integrate all the work accomplished here. The transition period will pose its own problems, and this also will call for the help and support of a therapist.

██████████ mentioned two areas which Father Burns will continue to work with ██████████ chronic self-devaluation and negative ruminations, which ██████████ feels can very well improve in future therapy.

Father Peter mentioned that, after Father Burns leaves here, he should have two weeks of real vacation separate from the time needed to move his belongings from one place to the other.

The meeting ended with Father Burns thanking Bishop Pelotte and the staff for all that has been done for him.

Reverend Neil R. Saller, T.O.R., J.U.L.
Director of Aftercare
Villa Louis Martin

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