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September 13, 1995

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Rev. William Lynn
Secretary for the Clergy
Archdiocese of Philadelphia
222 North 17th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Dear Bill:

After much thought and internal debate about the right course of action, I have decided to express my deep concern about Ed Avery's apparent return to an exhausting schedule of outside activities. I'm reluctant to get involved with his problems again, however I believe I have a duty to write.

On the evening of Tuesday, September 12, Ed left the hospital "uncovered" so that he could celebrate Mass for the Knights of Columbus in Springfield. He informed the switchboard operator that he had his long-range pager with him. While he was in Springfield, the Emergency Room nurse tried to reach him. Because he was so far away and the patient was on the verge of death, she had to call St. Jerome's parish for a priest to anoint the man. This man's family was at the hospital and they were considerably distressed. Fr. William Bispels, who was doing block collection, eventually responded to the call. Ed arrived after Bill had left. I called the ER to see if I was needed; when Ed realized I was on the line, he asked me "to cover" for him until 9:30 PM or so. I agreed to do so. He told me the Knights were waiting for him to return for Mass and the installation of officers.

Earlier that same evening (about 5:15 PM), the Mental Health Unit called for a priest to hear a patient's confession. The MHU staffer first called me. Not knowing then that Ed was out, I told her to call him on the short-range beeper. Of course, he wasn't in range and she couldn't reach him. At 8:30 PM, the MHU called me again because the woman was upset that the priest had ignored her. I went up and spent nearly an hour with her. And this was supposed to be my night "off."

On Monday evening Ed had asked Bill Bispels "to cover" for him. Bill politely declined because of block collection and the 7:30 PM Mass at St. Jerome's. Ed never asked me even though we had breakfast together on Tuesday morning.

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This most recent episode reflects the persistent tendency of Ed to take on many commitments. His schedule has once again become frenetic. Consider this: He works here three days, has CPE for two full days at Jeanes Hospital, does block collection two afternoons per week on hospital time, and is on St. Jerome's Sunday schedule. In addition, he is still doing "gigs" and Catholic-Jewish weddings (three such weddings during the weekend of September 2-11). Patients and others often report seeing him working as a DJ at block parties and other events. Moreover, he even solicits new engagements. This hardly seems to be an appropriate schedule for a person being treated for "workaholism."

I have tried to accommodate his needs by working out a long-range schedule, but even with this he still seems to have an insatiable need for "coverage." On several occasions I have "covered" for him at the last minute (once so he could go to a baseball game with a doctor), but I have qualms of conscience because these favors encourage him to continue making commitments that conflict with his duties here and with his treatment program. I don't want to be the proverbial "enabler" who defeats his treatment program.

When Ed is here he's wonderful. He's very thorough in doing his rounds and excellent with the patients and staff. But I sincerely believe that he must be forced to curtail his outside activities which conflict with his work and personal well-being.

Sincerely,

(Rev.) Michael Kerper

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