

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL
CHANCERY OFFICE
244 DAYTON AVENUE
SAINT PAUL 2, MINNESOTA

January 31, 1955.

My dear Father Heitzer:

Circumstances have arisen at Rosen of which you have more detailed knowledge than I possess that make it advisable for you to enter another field of service.

I hereby appoint you Pastor of the Church of Saint Michael in Gaylord with the Mission of Saint Francis de Sales at Winthrop, it being understood that you will assume charge Thursday, February tenth.

You will find herewith enclosed blanks for the report of the Church of Saint Joseph at Rosen for the month of January and the first Sunday of February and taking for granted that the Chancery has received your report for the year 1954.

Trusting that you may find your new field an opportunity for a fruitful ministry, I remain

Very faithfully yours,

Archbishop of Saint Paul.

✓
The Reverend Louis J. Heitzer,
The Church of Saint Joseph,
Rosen, Minnesota.

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL
CHANCERY OFFICE
244 DAYTON AVENUE
SAINT PAUL 2, MINNESOTA

September 27, 1955.

My dear Father Heitzer:

Information has come to me concerning a repetition of your conduct with boys that was the occasion of your transfer from other parishes on several instances.

If you have found from experience that it is not within your power to exercise essential self-control it is advisable that you be relieved of any further pastoral responsibility and allowed to have recourse to institutional treatment in the hope of finding a remedy.

When you have reflected fully on all the circumstances of your problem, let me know whether you desire to seek some other field of activity and specify what you think it should be.

Trusting that God will help you to make a decision of great importance to yourself and to others,

I remain

Very faithfully yours,

Archbishop of Saint Paul.

✓
The Reverend Louis J. Heitzer,
The Church of Saint Michael,
Gaylord, Minnesota.

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL
CHANCERY OFFICE
244 DAYTON AVENUE
SAINT PAUL 2, MINNESOTA

July 30, 1956.

My dear Father Heitzer:

Again circumstances have arisen with which you are acquainted that oblige me to provide another field for your activities: effective August 8.

I hereby appoint you Pastor of the Church of Saint Luke in Clearwater made vacant by the recent death of its pastor, Reverend John Kral.

You will find herewith enclosed blanks for the report of the Church of Saint Michelle in Gaylord and the Church of Saint Francis de Sales in Winthrop for the period of your administration during the year 1956.

Trusting that the future may be a time of greater achievement for you, I remain

Very faithfully yours,

Archbishop of Saint Paul.

v The Reverend Louis J. Heitzer,
The Church of Saint Michael,
Gaylord, Minnesota.

July 22, 1957

Reverend Louis J. Heitzer
St. Luke's Church
Clearwater, Minnesota

Reverend and dear Father:

I regret to write to you that people from your parish are filing complaints here of such seriousness that they threaten civil action against you. Since their complaints fit into the pattern of other similar complaints from the past, I have to presume that there is some basis for their concern.

You understand, of course, that if a civil complaint is made against you, I shall have to suspend your faculties and your work here as a priest will be at an end.

It does seem to me that in view of the past history of your problems, you would at once do whatever may be necessary to clear your self of the danger that is presented. If you wish to come to see me about this matter, I shall be here on Thursday afternoon of this week...the 25th of July. A change of duty will not be the important matter...this involves a complete change of life.

With every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Xto.,

Archbishop of St. Paul

7/24/57 warned him really that
any new complaint or civil
action would result in removal
to a sanitarium — and for
loss of priestly work here + wood

CHURCH OF SAINT MICHAEL

SAINT MICHAEL, MINNESOTA

August 7, 1957.

The Most Reverend William O. Brady S.T.D.
244 Dayton Ave.
St. Paul, Minnesota.

Dear Most Reverend Archbishop,

A delegation of fathers and mothers, including one of the trustees, from the parish of St. Luke at Clearwater just called on me to voice very serious complaints against their present pastor. Instead of relaying these complaints to you by means of a visit or letter from me, I have instructed the members of the delegation to call at your office and register their complaints directly with you or with the priests at the Chancery Office. Not only would they be able to inform you directly about experiences of members of their families, but they would also be in a much better position than I to answer questions about details which it would be quite impossible for me to anticipate.

In case you are not already familiar with the situation, permit me to call your attention to the fact that the pastor in question has had identical problems at other parishes. He appears to me mentally ill and to be in need of treatment.

Very sincerely yours,

Haitra

ARCH-011357

MEMO

DATE August 14, 1966

Concerning Complaints of immorality against Fr.

Louis Heitzer

Interested Party The Archbishop of St. Paul

MESSAGE:

On Saturday evening, August 13, 1966, at the New Prague rectory, I interviewed ^{five} ~~six~~ couples and one man regarding charges made that Fr. Louis Heitzer had been involved with any number of young boys in indecent actions and advances. I present first a summary of each individual complaint. At the end I shall present my summary and evaluation. Father Heitzer is the pastor of St. Scholastica's Church, Heidelberg, Minnesota and its mission, St. Joseph's, Lexington, Minnesota.

1. Mr. and Mrs.

None of their children have been molested. Mr. [redacted] is a trustee at his wife is book-keeper there. They claim that over one-half of the parishioners are aware of the fact that Fr. Heitzer has been molesting various boys. It is their understanding that the situation is also known among a large number of non-catholics in the area. These people would like to go on record as saying that Father has done a good job in the administration of the parish. They felt it would be best if Father would be both moved and put under the care of a Doctor.

2. [redacted]
XX

This couple lives [redacted] There [redacted] year old boy has never told his parents about the activities of Heitzer until the present. This son tells his parents now that he has never been molested and that he will refuse to talk any more of it.

Their [redacted] year old boy went swimming with Heitzer withing the last three weeks. While in the water Heitzer said, "I'll just take off your swimming trunks." In answer the boy said that he was cold and ran out of the water. Then the boy told his parents that Heitzer used the foulest language, and swore. Heitzer returned the boy home and asked him to say nothing.

The [redacted] year old boy says that he has seen Heitzer take off the pants of boys in the car. This couple further asserted that generally the children have become frightened; even the parents of other boys fear for their lives. One half of the parishioners know of the situation.

3. [redacted]

[redacted] Heitzer has been asking their [redacted] year old boy to ride along to the cities with him. On the other hand this couple do not believe that Fr. Heizer is doing that which is reported. Yet they say about 75% of the parishioners are gossiping about his homosexuality. Before this rash of gossip, most of the people were getting along well with Fr. Heitzer.

4. [redacted]

Their son [redacted] told his Father that Heitzer tried to remove his clothing, at the lake. His two older brothers know that Heitzer has removed the clothes of other

ARCH-011315

boys and they have seen him do this. [redacted] stated that there are other parents, who feared making the denunciation, have had their sons molested by Heitzer to the point of erection. Their children have heard dirty stories and swear words from Heitzer.

(in my opinion, this couple was the outstanding spokesman of the group. They are in their late [redacted] They seem to have the closest parental rapport with their children. On the other hand they reflected best their embarrassment in having to dis cuss the details of the problem. To indicated their earthiness they described the matter above concerning the stimulation of children to erection as making them get a "hard on." The couple showed a genuine nervousness in dealing with this question. twb)

5.

[redacted] He claimed that his son was molested about six years ago. He also stated that Heitzer rubbed the boy on the thighs while driving the car for Heitzer, that Heitzer would reach into the crotch, but above the clothing. [redacted] employs a [redacted] year old boy as a farm-hadn, [redacted] This boy has been molested and will admit it, so claims [redacted]

6.

[redacted] This couple has a [redacted] year old son. He refuses to say anything to his parents but admits that other boys have been molested by Heitzer. At this point, this lad refuses to associate with Fr. Heitzer.

.....

I have no reason to suspect that these people are not telling the truth. It was important to establish the general rapport which Fr. Heitzer has with his parishioners and I found that the relationship was rather good until the present situation arose. There are still some who will only believe if they see.

The meeting was begun at 7:35 pm. I opened it with a few words addressed to all concerning the seriousness of the situation and the apparent sickness of the accused. The group seemed more dismayed and upset than embittered. After these words I interviewed the couples, one by one. Their reports are short because, of course, they were not eye-witnesses to any of this. In checking the problem out with their sons almost all found that their boys just didn't want to talk, especially to the mothers. On the other hand, the parents didn't want to push the questioning too far thinking that greater harm would result.

Almost universally the people wanted to know if there was a cure for this type of thing. None of them displayed a knowledge of the psychological aspects of the problem. They, in their simplistic approach to life, could not understand why Father had been doing these things. For this reason they are a frightened people and they fear very much that if Heitzer discovers that they have denounced him, he will become violent and actually hurt someone.

It seemed important to me to establish whether or not the boys themselves would denounce Fr. Heitzer if this were ever necessary. The parents felt that many of the boys would talk freely about it, but not to their parents; certainly to a doctor. I am certain if this should ever have to be done the boys would talk to myself and/or the Archbishop. I told the people that this stage, hopefully, would never arrive.

It is not my province to determine whether or not Heitzer will admit the facts or not when he is confronted. I would guess that he would have to because of the evidence which, according to the people, there is much more of. If he should deny the children will talk. I repeat, the people were not bitter and these accusations did not come about merely to rid themselves of their pastor. They made no demand that Father be removed, only that he be cured. The people said that they will not go to confession to Fr. Heitzer and that his activities have spread beyond Heidelberg and Lexington to Union Hill, this they know for sure.

Terrance W. Berntson
Terrance W. Berntson

THE MINNEAPOLIS CLINIC

OF

PSYCHIATRY AND NEUROLOGY

4225 GOLDEN VALLEY ROAD
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55422

TELEPHONE 688-0661

September 8, 1966

221 MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55402

NEUROLOGY

G. SAMAK BAKER, M.D.
HAROLD BERRIS, M.D.
THOMAS H. DAVIS, M.D.
LAWRENCE A. FARBER, M.D.
RICHARD F. GALLBRAITH, M.D.
MALAND D. HURR, M.D.
JOHN M. MC KELVEY, M.D.
HAROLD H. HIRSH, M.D.
PAUL M. SILVERSTEIN, M.D.
ROBERT D. STOLTZ, M.D.

Most Reverend Gerald O'Keefe, D. D.
Archdiocese of St. Paul - Chancery
226 Summit Avenue
St. Paul, Minnesota

Re: Father Heitzer

Dear Bishop O'Keefe:

PSYCHIATRY

BURTON I. ABRAMSON, M.D.
RONALD H. BERRY, M.D.
THOMAS P. BURTON, M.D.
ROBERT E. CLARK, M.D.
DONALD R. DABBETT, M.D.
GEORGE D. DORSEY, JR., M.D.
WILLIAM E. DORSEY, M.D.
CLIFFORD D. ERICKSON, M.D.
JAMES T. GARVEY, M.D.
CHARLES A. HABERLE, M.D.
BRUCE H. HILLER, M.D.
GLENN M. LEWIS, JR., M.D.
MURRAY B. LOCKE, M.D.
DONALD M. MAYBERG, M.D.
JENNINGS C. L. PETELER, M. D.

As per our several conversations, I have had Father Heitzer in St. Mary's Hospital, Psychiatric Unit, for the past three weeks. We have done an extensive psychiatric and psychological workup on him with the following results.

Father Heitzer shows no signs of any type of psychotic process. He is well oriented and definitely is competent to function as a priest. Secondly, there are no signs of severe sexual maladjustment. I feel his problem in this area is more due to a neurotic disorder rather than any sexual pathology. Lastly, we did find a rather moderate psychoneurosis of the obsessive-compulsive type, and I do feel this has been helped by hospitalization.

ADOLESCENT AND CHILD PSYCHIATRY

PAUL W. BRANFORD, M.D.

PSYCHOLOGY

NICHOLAS BOBBELIS, PH.D.
SHERMAN E. HELDON, PH.D.
KENNETH A. PERKINS, PH.D.

It is my psychiatric opinion that Father Heitzer can be reassigned to duties as a priest with perfect safety at this time. I do feel he should see me weekly on out-patient psychotherapy, but this is more of a preventative measure. I would be my impression that assignment to some city parish as an assistant where he can be supervised and kept away from younger boys would be the wisest choice at this time.

SOCIAL WORK

LORING ABRAHAMSON, M.S.W.
DARROLL A. HUNY, M.S.W.
NORMAN J. BEBAL, M.S.W.

CREDIT

EARLENE DEWMAN

ADMINISTRATION

WILLIAM M. BOTMAN

I would be most happy to discuss this with you or Archbishop Binz at your convenience.

Yours truly,


James T. Garvey, M. D.

JTG/ml

September 14, 1966

Reverend Joseph E. Bender
Church of St. Richard
7601 Penn Avenue South
Richfield
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55423

Dear Father Bender,

I enclose herewith for your information a copy of the letter I have just now written to Father Heitzer.

As I told you by telephone Father Heitzer will report to you on Friday.

I have not directly given Father Heitzer an appointment as your Assistant Pastor; but it seems to me I should do so through you, the appointment to be in effect as long as Father remains with you. Please inform him of this appointment which will not be published in The Catholic Bulletin.

The duties to be assigned Father Heitzer may be generally the priestly work of the Parish. He should not, however, be given any responsibility at all in the school. Also on visiting hospitals, nursing homes etc., he must keep away from the rooms of young boys. You would do well, I believe, to repeat to him that you have been informed of these limitations which I have placed on his work and make it your own directive as well.

If you should have any reason at any time to doubt Father Heitzer's fidelity to these instructions please inform the Chancery promptly.

I assume that Father Heitzer will earn and be paid the regular salary of an Assistant Pastor.

I thank you warmly for consenting to accept Father Heitzer.

With sentiments of esteem and kindest regards, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Saint Paul



226 Summit Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

December 14, 1966

Not sent

Dr. James T. Garvey
The Minneapolis Clinic of Psychiatry and Neurology
4225 Golden Valley Road
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55422

Dear Dr. Garvey,

I thank you for your good letter of December 6, 1966. Your report concerning the health of Father Louis J. Heitzer seems to be encouraging in so far as you mention that Father has made good progress.

Your latest thinking is that Father could better make his final progress in a rural atmosphere. Apparently he has indicated some tension relative to an urban situation as well as proximate association with fellow priests.

The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, as you are aware, is an urban ecclesiastical jurisdiction. I am constantly restricted in determining parochial situations for my priests who desire the rural atmosphere; I am in this case restricted also by geography.

Father Heitzer may not return to the area from whence he has immediately come. In his last assignment he served two parishes, and therefore his condition became known to the people of a much larger area than would have been the case had his activities been confined within the boundaries of one parish only. His problem has had rather extensive publicity in most of the districts which surround Heidelberg and Lexington, Minnesota.

I am restricted in sending Father Heitzer to the North, to the area of Wright and Anoka Counties, because his condition caused his removal from that area just prior to his last assignment in Heidelberg.

On the other hand, you have confidently offered the hope that his previous problem would not create any difficulties. In reviewing Father Heitzer's history, I find traces of this problem for many, many years. To my knowledge, this is the first attempt to seek psychiatric care, and before I reassign Father Heitzer to a rural community in which he will find himself

relatively alone, I must have your best assurance that his problem can be medically controlled in a rural setting as well as in an urban situation.

The larger question concerns whether or not Father Heitzer should be given any parochial responsibility at all, whether it be rural or urban. There seems to be a question of his general competency at issue along with the moral problem.

Would it be possible or advisable to retain Father in his present situation for some months more? If he might stay where he is, would his progress be greatly retarded? Should he not perhaps spend some time outside of the Archdiocese in a rural situation but with priestly companionship and moderate supervision?

I would want very much that Father be able to see the horrendous spiritual consequences of his former ways which have been destructive of spiritual growth in himself and in others. It seems to me that part of Father Heitzer's recuperation could well be in the area of priestly spiritual re-evaluation and re-orientation.

You have worked closely with Father and you know him by this time better perhaps than he knows himself. It is not easy for me to send him back to a parish. The first problem is that there are none open. If he were to be offered a parish, I would have to ask another pastor to resign. There are many areas where he simply cannot return.

In view of what I have so far related to you, I am wondering if there would be any other possible solution which, while medically tenable, would deter for some time yet Father's desire to administrate a parish, and on the contrary, enhance his desire to re-orientate himself spiritually by some program of redevelopment within a controlled and priest affiliated atmosphere. This could be readily available.

I am most anxious to discuss with you these further possibilities.

With sentiments of esteem and kindest regards, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

December 15, 1966

Reverend Joseph E. Bender
Church of St. Richard
7601 Penn Avenue South
Richfield
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55423

Dear Father Bender,

You spoke with me at the Senate meeting of the position of Father Louis J. Heitzer.

Also his doctor has written me now; and for your information I enclose a copy of the Doctor's communication.

I inquire whether you are convinced that Father Heitzer can safely be sent back to a rural area in the near future.

When we spoke at the Cathedral I asked if you know of any place where he could be an Assistant.

On my part I am not at all sure he can make good as a pastor. I fear that we are only subjecting a new place to subsequent scandal if we give him charge of a parish.

Do you think there would be any merit in sending him to a place like Nevis, Minnesota, in the Diocese of Crookston. He would live in the Institution during the week; but at the discretion of the superiors week end service is often rendered on Saturdays and Sundays. The area, I am told, is very rural.

I plan to ask Doctor Garvey for more specific interpretations of his letter and, in substance, I shall ask of him the same questions as I am asking yourself.

It is a fact, of course, that there is no parish open just now.

Neither do I know of any place in the country where a change of assistants can be made.

I shall value your best thinking and advice in these matters.

With sentiments of esteem and kindest regards, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

December 15, 1966

Dr. James T. Garvey
The Minneapolis Clinic of Psychiatry and Neurology
4225 Golden Valley Road
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55422

Dear Doctor Garvey,

I thank you for your letter of December 6 regarding Father Louis J. Heitzer.

I

Near the end of the second paragraph I read the sentence: "I do not feel that his previous problem would create any difficulties". As I read that sentence it is an assurance that professionally you are satisfied Father Heitzer will not revert to the former practices which in the past have caused so much trouble. It seems to me, however, that meaning is not entirely clear in the text.

If there is danger that the former practices may be resumed, they will certainly, I think, create difficulties in any community to which I might send him without providing adequate supervision.

He has been moved about much in the past and there are not many possible places left, if any, to which he can be sent.

The matter is an important one, I am satisfied, because any relapse, if he is assigned to the administration could mean his permanent shelving.

II

The second question I have about your letter concerns the phrase "an assignment....where he can function more independently." To me this phrase means that you are recommending that he be given the charge to administer a rural parish as soon as such an appointment can conveniently be made. If I am mistaken on the interpretation of what you have said, please clarify it.

Among the priests assigned to advise me on appointments I am encountering considerable opposition to the ideas that Father can be reassigned so soon to the charge of a rural parish, even if one does become available. Communications

are rapid in these days and the memory of Father's actions in Heidelberg is fresh. There is a feeling that he will be rejected from the beginning almost anywhere he may go.

Factually, I should say that Parish openings do not come quickly. Ask any priest in the two top years of seniority as Assistants; and they will picture the situation a bit dramatically. Openings come with death, resignation, or removal. No one can say now when Father might be able to get a Parish assignment again.

If you feel that a temporary change meanwhile, away from Father Bender and under some other supervision, such a change could certainly be made by June. It might possibly be made more urgently if any urgency were indicated.

Another thought enters my mind. At Nevis, Minnesota, (outside this Diocese) is a home for priests located in rural surroundings. The priest in charge assists those assigned there to reorientate themselves spiritually. They regularly, but not always, render weekend assistance in Parishes. The area has no large Parishes; and they substitute for priests who are sick or on vacation. I could offer such a change to Father Heitzer quickly if it is professionally advisable.

Laymen often enough suggest seeking placement of problem priests in other Dioceses. If Father were to seek such a permission it could be granted. The practice is not successful when a Bishop seeks to initiate it.

This communication is intended in part to seek clarification of what you have already written me and in part to see if I am translating your professional advice into anything approximating what you have in mind.

I am deeply concerned for our people that they should not again be scandalized as at Heidelberg.

I am also concerned for Father Heitzer that we should not without due preparation place him in a situation which could involve permanent disbarment from priestly functions.

With sentiments of esteem and kindest regards, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

THE CHURCH OF SAINT RICHARD

7601 South Penn
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55423

December 21, 1966

The Most Reverend Leo Binz,
226 Summit Avenue,
St. Paul, Minnesota.

Most Reverend Archbishop:

I regret the delay in responding to your letter of December 15, but I have been extremely busy.

In regard to the three questions you have asked:

1. I am at a loss to say whether Fr. Heitzer can be returned to a rural parish alone in the near future. Bishop O'Keefe gave me only the barest outline of his problem and its history. Not knowing how frequently these lapses were, I find it hard to express an opinion. Wasn't he some years at Heidelberg before the recurrence of this problem? He seems perfectly normal in his conduct here, except for his complaint about not sleeping well and inability to adjust to city living.

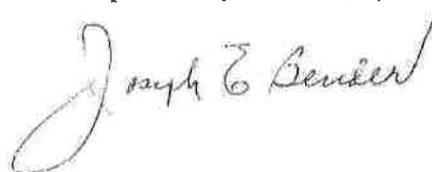
One thing troubles me. He has said twice to me that this whole thing was exaggerated; I get the impression from him that a few people at Heidelberg reported him who were not his friends. Since you have proof to the contrary, I wonder whether he fully realizes the seriousness of what he has done, or whether he is merely trying to improve his reputation with me, assuming (rightly) that I do not know exact details.

I can only say that he has conducted himself well here as far as I can tell.

2. If he finds it intolerable here, I might suggest Father Streff at Forest Lake or a chaplaincy in a girls school (Villa Maria?). I do not know how any of the persons involved in these suggestions would react to them, including Father Heitzer. I would favor the first. However, I think that Fr. Heitzer could continue here if he knew for sure that a change was coming in May or June. We do need and value his help.
3. As for Nevis, I think I would reserve that alternative until others are exhausted. In this assignment you show confidence in him. To send him to Nevis after this assignment might indicate that you felt his progress was unsatisfactory. I think a brief stay there before being given a parish again might be helpful as a preparatory retreat.

My advice at present is this: Since Fr. Heitzer knows that Dr. Garvey has written to you, he is expecting a letter. In such a letter I would assure him that reports from Dr. Garvey are encouraging, that you know he would prefer being in the country, that re-assignment elsewhere would likely be possible in May or June, that you trust that he can carry on until that time.

Respectfully in Christ,



September 24, 2002

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

I have been carrying your letter of August 29 with me for some weeks. I had hoped to be able to respond to you with a more thorough description of the steps that we intend to take to go back to the many parishes where people like Father Heitzer abused children. We are still discussing how we should do that, and I did not want to hold up a response to you any longer. I apologize, in fact, for waiting these several weeks.

I am grateful to you for writing to me, even though that is very painful news. As I have come to learn more about what Louis Heitzer did, I believe he was perhaps the most abusive priest ever to be a part of this Archdiocese. I now believe that he abused boys every place he went. He caused great harm and left behind many damaged lives. I am deeply sorry that [REDACTED] experienced that damage.

It saddens me even more to know that Archdiocesan leaders became aware of this some time along the way and could have taken stronger steps to prevent further abuse. While Father Heitzer had to face an accounting for his actions, I think that there are others in our Church who had to face an accounting for their inaction.

Learning of abuse by people like Louis Heitzer has motivated me to see that we do not commit the same sins of omission. As you know, the Catholic Church in the United States is going through a period of accountability. I am proud to say that we had taken important steps here under the leadership of Archbishop Roach and Archbishop Flynn. I am sure there is still more for us to learn. As I will be praying for your family, I in turn ask your prayers for the continued conversion of our Church's leadership.

If you [REDACTED] would like to talk about all of this, I would be happy to do so. I would make the same offer, [REDACTED] to you. I am grateful to you for taking the time to write.

I expect that we will be taking some more active steps this fall to go back to places where we have good reason to believe abuse took place. Please pray for the success of that effort. I wish you well in your ministry of service to God and his people.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend Kevin M. McDonough
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia

ARCH-ESI-0000543