



Bishop's Residence,

Grand Falls, Newfoundland

March 31, 1970

Rev. L. J. Kelly
Baie Verte

Dear Father Kelly,

Doctor Clare came to see me yesterday and it is evident that your problem is far more deep-seated than I gathered from you. It seems that you have been committing these acts over a long period and that probably means sacrilegious Masses among other things.

I am going to Ottawa at the end of the week and I will ask about a suitable institution where you can receive treatment.

Meanwhile, you should make immediate preparations to leave Baie Verte permanently. To avoid scandal you can say that you have not been feeling well and need medical care. You may stay there until you hear from me.

As soon as I have some definite plan for you I will write you and let you know. My only desire is to help you get back on your feet. To do that I need absolute frankness on your part. Before choosing an institution, I need to know if you have a drinking problem in addition to the other and if the latter is triggered or aggravated by drinking. Please be very frank with me if you wish me to help you as I am sure you do. I thought of calling a meeting of the consultants but decided against it for fear that something might out.

Sincerely yours in Christ

+ J. M. O'Neill
Bishop of Grand Falls



Emmanuel Convalescent Foundation • R.R. No. 2, Aurora, Ontario • phone 416-727-4214

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JOHN R. KELLY

23 June 1970

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Most Reverend J. M. O'Neill
Bishop of Grand Falls
Bishop's Residence
Grand Falls, Newfoundland

Your Excellency:

Re: Father Leonard Kelly

herewith are quotations from a psychological
progress report on Father Leonard Kelly:

"Initially he appears to be deep in a
hopeless round of guilt and resentment
with the conscious focus of problems
being his rather pathetic homosexual
adventures. On psychological testing
he emerged without significant homo-
sexual pathology and in general trends,
tended to be more anti-social and sus-
picious than sexually deviant.

"The patient minimized his alcohol problem
on first coming to Southdown -- a fairly
typical feature with most incoming priests.
Initially he was cautious in his approach
to therapy and somewhat suspicious that he
could be given any help. Very recently he
has demonstrated considerable improvement.
The focus has been removed from the 'red
herring' of the homosexual episodes to more
basic difficulties in personality structure,
re: non-trust and withdrawal.
I do not feel the sexual episodes will cause
any future difficulties if this priest is
successful in his attempt to separate himself
from alcohol. Steady progress is being made
in this area."

The final paragraph of the psychologist's report,
your Excellency, points up the important question
of assignment which you have already mentioned in
earlier correspondence:

"It is felt that when returned to the ministry, Father Kelly should not be removed from the Diocese since sexual problems play only a small role in his total inability to adjust. Rather than being removed from the home Diocese, he should be given considerable support in his attempt to attack his central alcoholic difficulties. If this support can be forthcoming from his superiors and he is allowed to remain in his home Diocese, he will retain his sense of identity and will be given a boost to his very low morale which will go a long way to ensure ultimate recovery and success."

After a long discussion with Father Kelly yesterday, I was cheered and heartened by the obvious progress he is making with his feelings. He is a priest who is truly trying to grow. He wants only a priesthood that is constructive and positive. Like so many other men whose tolerance for alcohol breaks, he is now beginning to be aware of the severity of his drinking and readily acknowledges the unmistakable fact that most restraints which men know against anti-social behaviour are eroded and eventually destroyed by the onslaught of addiction.

I feel that in conscience I must support our psychologist's statement. Father Kelly tells me he has been removed from his parish. If he could be stationed elsewhere in the Diocese, I am willing to say that he would receive the kind of psychological support which he badly needs and there would be no need for him to feel rejection and frustration. He would have the assurance that he was being welcomed back and that the isolation, the difficulty of withdrawal, the anger which has burned low in him so long are now recognized and have surfaced. I am hopeful that you will be able to find a place for him in the Diocese in the belief that such an assignment will contribute to his future welfare and success.

I will be pleased to have your comments at your convenience.

Faithfully yours,

JRK:jc


John R. Kelly



Bishop's Residence,

Grand Falls, Newfoundland

July 6, 1970

Mr. John R. Kelly
Southdown Ontario

Dear Mr. Kelly,

Replying to your latest letter referring to Father Leonard Kelly, I would like you to know that I purposely delayed answering until I could consider the implications and consult some of my advisers.

The report of your Psychiatrist is hopeful, but seems to indicate deep psychiatric problems in Father Kelly of which, I have to say, I was completely unaware. Priests are forever saying: "Why does not the bishop do something about this or that?" Meanwhile, none of them will inform the bishop as to what is going on. The report of the Doctor seems to indicate that it will take quite some time yet before Father Kelly is ready to return to the active ministry.

You say that Father Kelly tells you that he has been removed from his parish. For the record, he removed himself. He came to me, confessed his sexual aberrations and threw himself on my mercy. It must be obvious to him, as it is to me, that he was lucky to get out of Baie Verte with his name unsullied. There could well have been a court case with all its ugly implications. Even he should realize that ^{it} is not merely a case of taking up where he left off.



Bishop's Residence,

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Grand Falls, Newfoundland

Perhaps, when you advised his return to this diocese, you did not realize the nature of the diocese. We have only twenty seven parishes and not too much room to manouver. I hardly think you would expect me to re-instate him immediately as a Parish Priest. There are only three or four parishes which can support a curate and his appointment as a curate would cause far more comment than his temporary appointment in another diocese. One of our priests is working in Peru with the priests from Halifax and it would not cause too much talk if Father Kelly were loaned to the Archdiocese of Halifax on a temporary basis.

While my sympathy goes out to Father Kelly, as it would to any poor priest in trouble, I cannot be expected to condone the seriousness of his betrayal of confidence and the terrible scandal which, but for the discretion of the family involved, could have blighted the whole life of the Church in this small Province. I dont think he can have any grievance if I find some other bishop to help him get back on his feet.

You seemed to indicate in your first letter that it would take a long time for Father Kelly to find his feet. I am prepared to pay his expenses until you consider him fit to return to pastoral duties. In the meantime, if you can find some bishop in upper Canada who would be willing to give him a chance to reinstate himself and get out of being a conversational piece in Newfoundland, I sincerely believe his interests and those of the Church in Nfld. would be best served.

I shall await with interest your next report.

Sincerely yours in Christ

+ J. M. O'Neill
Bishop of Grand Falls



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July 22, 1970

Executive Director
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Most Rev. J. M. O'Neill
Bishop of Grand Falls
Bishop's Residence
Grand Falls, Newfoundland

Dear Bishop O'Neill:

Re: Father Leonard Kelly

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JOHN R. KELLY
R.R. 2
Aurora, Ontario

I have not as yet, told Father Leonard Kelly the contents of your letter of July 6th. I feel I owe you an apology for having unwittingly inferred that Father Kelly told me he had been removed from his parish. On his arrival here he was very candid on this score and told me directly that he had removed himself from the Baie Verte. I am keenly aware that his conduct could have created wide-spread scandal and I am grateful that this was avoided.

The more we see of Father Kelly, the more we become convinced that he can make a good recovery. His motivation is good and it becomes increasingly apparent that prolonged drinking had removed, as it frequently does, the restraints which normally he would have exercised in his relationships with the boys in question. After having dealt with priests for many years, I can easily understand how a Bishop can be unaware of a man's pathological drinking. I am also aware that it is seldom that fellow priests will relate another priest's sickness to a Bishop. Thus a man's breakdown continues and becomes more subtle and complex as time wears on.

Without revealing the contents of your letter to him, I asked Father Kelly to tell me his feelings about assignment after discharge from Southdown. Because he is a passive, shy and somewhat withdrawn personality, he seemingly could entertain only the idea of going back to Newfoundland, somewhere in the Conception Bay area as assistant. I gently suggested the advisability to his spending a year in Halifax or perhaps in this area, pointing out

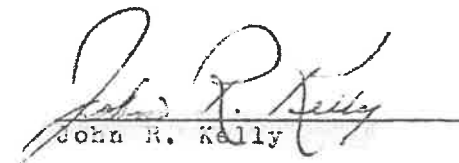
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to him that his own spiritual and psychological levels might be enhanced by a change in environment. Obviously, this suggestion did not appeal to him. The ties seemingly run deep with family, friends, etc. I broke off the discussion at that point and Father Kelly is to discuss the situation again today with our clinical psychologist.

I do believe I could be of assistance to you and to Father Kelly in finding him an assignment in this general area, if this would eventually meet with your approval. Presently, we have several priests in our extern program, serving as assistants in parishes in either the Toronto or Hamilton dioceses. These men are not officially discharged from Southdown, but on the other hand, residence fees, etc. are stopped when they take an assignment. While it is difficult at this moment to say exactly when Father Kelly might be ready for discharge, I am willing to venture the opinion that we can make some move during the latter part of August. He goes back into the hospital here briefly on Friday of this week for about three days for repair of his surgery. The post operative area is draining slightly and this should be cleared up. As quickly as his discussions with our psychologist are completed, I will write again advising you of these developments.

With my assurance that we will do everything humanly possible to co-operate with your wishes, I am.

Faithfully yours,


John R. Kelly

JRK:sn



Bishop's Residence,

Grand Falls, Newfoundland

July 30, 1970

Mr. John R. Kelly
Emmanuel Convelescent Foundation
Aurora Ont.

Dear Mr. Kelly,

I am more than pleased with your recent report on Father Leonard Kelly, and with your considered opinion that he can be rehabilitated completely. By the same mail I received a letter from Father Kelly himself. He says that he is following the course faithfully and that he has found enormous benefit from having the chance to stand off and take a good look at himself. He hopes to "serve God in a more worthy and priestly manner in the years ahead." These sentiments seem to indicate that his stay at Southdown has been a fruitful period in his priestly life.

He did not at any time mention to me the question of his future assignment, nor did I give him any encouragement to hope that he would come back to this diocese. I believe, but am not sure, that I did mention to him the possibility of working for a time in the Halifax Archdiocese.

Your suggestion of finding him an assignment in your immediate area is an excellent one and I am all in favour of it. For him to come back here and be assigned as an assistant in Conception Bay would cause all sorts of embarrassing questions on the part of both priests and people alike. Only one priest asked me a direct question and I simply said that Father Kelly's nerves had given out. The advantage of his working in that area would be that he could keep in touch with Southdown for an indefinite period. When you and the staff were convinced that he could stand on his own feet, I would consider taking him back as Parish Priest or Administrator in a parish where he could be watched closely. Perhaps, after a year in your area, he could spend another year in the Halifax diocese and then return to work here. I am writing him along these lines and you are at liberty to discuss the matter with him.

Sincerely yours in Christ

J. A. M. M. M. M. M.



Bishop's Residence,

Grand Falls, Newfoundland

July 30, 1970

Rev. Leonard Kelly
Emmanuel Convalescent Foundation
Aurora Ont.

Dear Father Kelly,

I was very glad to get your letter a few days ago and especially happy with the tone of it. That you are taking the treatment seriously and cooperating with the officials and doctors augurs well for your complete rehabilitation. It is apparent that you were a very sick and mixed up priest. Why or how it did not become apparent to me or to your brother priests is hard to understand. As it is, we are all fortunate that the situation did not become public with irreparable damage to the Church and the priesthood.

Now, fortunately, all that is past and I am happy to forget the whole thing and look forward to your future work in the holy Priesthood. As you can, I hope, realize, I cannot assign you to a parish on your release from Southdown without a period of probation.

In the same mail which brought your letter, I received a letter from Mr. John Kelly in which he expresses himself as very well satisfied with the progress you have made. He expects that you will be ready for assignment towards the end of August. He further suggested that he could get you an assignment in his immediate area and I am completely in favour of that as a temporary solution to the problem of your re-admission to the active ministry. By accepting an assignment in that area you could keep in touch with Southdown. I am afraid you will face a period of crisis when you find yourself outside the institution and once again on your own. The temptation to hoist a few in celebration will be almost over-powering. I would feel much happier if you were in continual contact with Southdown for a few months after your discharge.



2.

Bishop's Residence,

Grand Falls, Newfoundland

For you to come back here immediately and be sent as an assistant to one of the Parish Priests in Conception Bay would cause endless speculation and suspicion. Only one priest asked me about you and I simply said that your nerves had given out and you needed treatment. If, after a few months in Ontario, things work out well you could come nearer home and have a period in the Halifax diocese, eventually returning to take a new parish in this diocese.

In his letter, Mr. Kelly indicated that the idea of working in Ontario or even in Halifax did not appeal to you. I assure you that I have your welfare in mind when I suggest the program outlined above.

I am writing Mr. Kelly along these lines and authorizing him to discuss the matter with you.

With my blessing and the assurance of my prayers

Sincerely yours in Christ

J. M. Cneill
Bishop of Grand Falls