

TVD

February 21, 1973

Dear Bishop Medeiros:

I was stunned not by the number of complaints you received but by your prejudgemental tone in writing to me. To say "if these allegations are true" and then go on for a lengthy paragraph touching not only my orthodoxy but my very motives, I could hardly believe that you actually wrote this.

I am truly sorry that my radio appearance brought you new problems in the midst of your recent honors but in such a sensitive area people's emotions lead them to hear what they want. Machiavelli wrote: "The great majority of mankind is satisfied with appearances, as though they were realities, and are more influenced by things that seem than by things that are." Yet it is so important to discuss these issues despite the danger of scandal since the scandal of silence causes far greater suffering than the scandal "in pusillorum" your letter reflects. "It is when we all play safe that we create a world of utmost insecurity."

On three occasions during that program I reminded Listeners that although I was certainly concerned about the questions of morality it was with the larger question of what we Christians do to homosexuals rather than what homosexuals do with their bodies. Stoning a woman taken in adultery as the Old Testament advises would be a far greater sin than the one she committed. To attempt to restrain the stoners might well give the impression that one condoned adultery, but any degree of sophistication would induce hesitation in arriving at that verdict. Who can tell us why the Priest passed by the man lying by the roadside between Jerusalem and Jericho? Perhaps the victim was a homosexual, but the Samaritan cared not. By our silence we churchmen can ourselves encourage our people to walk by in silence or worse - to actually be the attackers of homosexuals. But it would be utterly outrageous then to turn back and attack the good Samaritan too.

I did not say that masturbation was not morally evil. Rather that few young Priests today believe or teach young people that it is mortally sinful as we did ten years ago. Your own Professor of Moral Theology, Rev. James O'Donohoe, would insist that this distinction is crucial and not contradictory. I did say that some reputable moral theologians, scripture scholars and even the NFPC are requesting the church to review her stand on homosexuality. Noivan, Curran, Kennedy et al. If their views are indeed contrary to doctrine, I would have thought they would be silenced or at very least repudiated. In any case the quarrel is with them not me. When a Cardinal Archbishop has an approved Mass for Gays in his Archdiocese (Chicago) without explanation, then perhaps the danger of scandal emanates from those who permit it rather than from those like myself who mention it.

I would welcome some statement from you or the Bishops on the position of the Church on masturbation or homosexuality since confusion reigns. According to an article appearing in The Boston Pilot some years ago premarital intercourse was not in the 13th century a bar to Holy Communion. Now it is. The primary purpose of marriage was procreation when I was in the seminary. Now it is not, I am told. I am not a learned scholar but having invested large amounts of time and money over the last few years in study, I can tell you that the writings of Catholic theologians on masturbation and homosexuality have led to great confusion and a detailed explanation of the official church

position needs to be elucidated. If I taught in Boston (which I did not) what scores of theologians, Priest-psychologists and scripture scholars are teaching with impunity around the world (that adolescent masturbation in se is not serious sin) I invite the charge of scandal. When a Bishop or many Bishops do not silence these theologians, then presumably there is room for that opinion.

As an example of what leads to confusion: Pope Paul speaks against birth control. Washington Priests publically disagree. Their Bishop silences them and receives Papal approval. National Conferences of Bishops of several countries announce a policy that virtually coincides with that of the suspended Priests. Rome does not silence the Bishops...Now confusion reigns. If I teach in Boston or Washington what what the Bishops of those several conferences taught, I am in error but they are not? I am suspended but they are not even verbally corrected? If I do not teach what those Bishops taught but simply advert to the fact that they, not I, said it, am I then in danger of "expressing views contrary to the teaching of the church?" What is the teaching? Further, can a Priest be suspended for agreeing with 50 Bishops if his own Bishop disagrees? If the teaching is clear and the Bishops in accord, then what are we to make of the fact that most Priests and people believe and practice contrarily regarding masturbation?

As you might expect of me, my words were deliberately chosen, detailed, not off-the-cuff or rash. I took great pains to allay fears and misinterpretations and was ever conscious of the sensitivities of the older, conservative Catholic. I hold no views contrary to the doctrine of the Catholic Church of which I am conscious and even if I did would never presume to preach them while pretending I was speaking as a Priest for the Church. That I am a Pied Piper leading youth astray has been an oft-alleged and mean-minded judging of my motives which deserves no reply.

Because I reached out to runaways, it was once said I approved of running away. Years later you yourself established a hostel for them. Because I once reached out to draft dodgers and deserters, I was once called a traitor. You yourself later established a ministry to counsel them. Because I once worked with drug abusers, I was accused of encouraging drug abuse. You yourself much, much later would appoint Mel Surrette to do the same. Now to work with sexual variants, the new form alienation has taken will be to incur wrath of Catholics and it will be said that I encourage it. Jesus was killed because He ate and drank with sinners and He told us that if we love those who love us, act like us, wear their hair as we do, subscribe to the same political or patriotic stance as we, adopt the same sexual morality as we -- if we love those people we are no better than the pagans or the tax-collectors. We must love those who disagree with us.

Your original estimation of my genuine concern for youth needs in no way to be re-assessed as a result of this radio program. Surely you are aware that I have more than my share of detractors (as do you) and despite bone-weariness find the energy to walk back into the fray knowing full well the consequences.

My immediate Superior, Father Robert Bullock, heard the program and can recall nothing that appeared to him contrary to doctrine. The Urban Sisters heard the same talk several days later and could find no error in it. Ironically, Monsignor John Sexton wrote to congratulate me on the program but to complain that I didn't get into the morality question. ("You insisted on disassociation of morality from the

gravamen of the discussion. Maybe you could talk me out of it, but I don't see how morality can be detached from any realistic study of homosexuality." So I am damned for doing it and for not. From textbooks used in your own seminary and from verbatim class notes taken in seminary lectures, I can establish if need be that rightly or wrongly the same sources I quoted on the air are taught in seminary courses. Those who would come to take me away will find a heavy load.

Since you mention that informants are "good people" not cranks, I imagine that you must reply to them, (I too would like the opportunity to confront them since I think calumniators and detractors have as much responsibility as I to defend their accusations) I suggest you send them copies of the enclosed U. S. Catholic article, A Christian Response to Homosexuals. At some point in the future you might be available to talk with me about the plight of this growing minority group in the Archdiocese. As you mentioned, you are the Shepard of the faithful and God will hold you accountable for their spiritual welfare. But I suspect that you must be somewhat unaware of what is happening -- of the new sexual runaway, average age 15, who is trickling into Boston's gay ghetto. Of the suicide rate which is now the first cause of death among gay youth. (I enclose a typical letter of a boy who took his own life before I could get to him.) Of the hundreds of young hustlers who sell their bodies on our two meatracks and of the increase in hustling among Junior High schoolers in the suburbs. I am sure you have neither time nor interest in the rock music but David Bowie, Lou Reed, The Dolls, Alice Cooper and the Midler girl have all expressed their homosexuality, bisexuality, transvestism, ambisexuality or whatever and they are the top drawing musicians on the local scene. Decadence will be the next form alienation takes.

One in three men has had some homosexual experience, one in five has had extensive experience and one in twenty is exclusively homosexual. Twenty million homosexuals in America. The American Psychiatric Association is considering removing this from their list of emotional illnesses. There are three or four times more bisexuals than homosexuals. Three male to two female homosexuals. The second worst thing to be in America is gay. The worst is to be black and gay.

What happens to the homosexual youthful offender? I have had several talks with the Dept. of Youth Services and the Division of Child Guardianship on this matter. In reform schools, they are inevitably raped. In Half-way houses, they are emotionally destroyed. There are three solutions which occur to me and which I am proposing but the point is that we, the Church, must be aware and concerned.

The greater proportion of violence visited upon Gays comes from the Christian (in Boston read Catholic) community. Just as young Catholics in my boyhood felt it an act of piety to beat up a Jew on Blue Hill Avenue or stone a protestant church, so today's Christians think they do God a service when they beat up a fag. If you have the purity of angels, and the abortionless, monogamous church-blessed marriage; if you have the faith of Peter and the education of parochial schools; if your speech be devoid of four letter words yet you have not charity toward homosexuals then...tinkling brass...sounding cymbals... Catholic but hardly Christian. Have you ever received any mail from any of these critics protesting what we are doing to homosexuals or is their concern only about what homosexuals do? There are degrees of sin. Please God I am found among the latter rather than the former, if it must be one.

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Please support and encourage me. I need to know that you, as did your predecessor, will presume that the love of God and His Church which alone could have kept me in the priesthood against seemingly insuperable adversaries and conditions, still motivates my activities among the disenfranchised of this world. I am not unaware that I am an embarrassment to you and my brother priests. It is no small source of sorrow to me, yet no other path seems consonant with my obligations. You above all others must know the enervating tension of misunderstanding and prejudice. Jesus knew it.

As a sign of my filial obedience and to save you embarrassment, I have suspended my own faculties and will not celebrate Mass, preach or administer the Sacraments until you have evaluated this incident and assured yourself of my orthodoxy.

Bon Voyage!

Sincerely,

*Paul Shanley*