

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Camarillo, CA 93010
August 24, 1986

Your Honor:

I am writing to you in regard to the Case of Chris Andersen. My background is as follows: I was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in 1962. After one year of parish work, I studied at the University of Southern California, earning a Ph.D. in English Literature. Since 1965 I have been teaching in the seminaries of the Archdiocese, first at the undergraduate level (1965-79), then at the graduate level (1979 to the present). I have taught courses in theology as well as literature, and I have been active in the spiritual formation of future priests, serving for the past fourteen years as Spiritual Director, with one term as president of the National Federation of Spiritual Directors.

In regard to Chris Andersen, I am aware of the charges which have been made against him; he has discussed the matter with me during three rather lengthy conversations. The severity of the accusation of sexual abuse or molestation of a minor child is quite clear to me.

I have known Chris Andersen for twelve years. While he was an undergraduate at St. John's Seminary College, until his graduation in 1978, I was his professor in several course in English literature and religion, as well as his personal spiritual director. This latter relationship is one of long tradition in the Christian church; the director serves as spiritual guide, counselor or adviser to the directee, and an atmosphere of trusting self-disclosure and confidentiality is essential. During Chris's last three years before ordination, 1979-82, I also served as his spiritual director, because by that time I had been transferred to the graduate theological school. Chris and I have remained friends since his ordination, meeting socially from time to time.

Throughout these past twelve years I have known Chris Andersen to be a kind, generous, outgoing man, intelligent and thoughtful in his studies and work, consistently solicitous for the welfare of others and to be of service to them. He has seemed to me to behave with patience, prudence, tolerance of others, and general maturity. I considered him to be a

[REDACTED]
51000410

promising candidate for priesthood, and I have considered him to be effective and successful in his priestly ministry during the past four years.

I do not know how Chris got involved in his present trouble. My own strong sense of the situation, though, is as follows: I do not see Chris as a pre-meditating, manipulative planner of any misconduct with the young men involved. That simply does not square with the man I know quite well. It does seem possible to me, however, that in the moments at hand, he might well have misjudged what was appropriate physical expression, especially given the atmosphere of adult-child contacts in our society at present. To give a concrete example, what Chris might have considered something as harmless as "wrestling" or "horsing around" (and what might, indeed, have passed for such during his own childhood) might objectively have been out of line and subjectively (for the children involved) confusing and disturbing.

The above is, of course, conjecture. And the fact may be that what Chris did was quite wrong. Nevertheless, I contend strongly that imprisonment or lengthy incarceration would serve no purpose, inasmuch as I believe that Chris Andersen has not acted maliciously and is not deserving of the punishment of entering our prison system--a system which very likely would do nothing to better him and might, indeed, end up being destructive both physically and spiritually. If expert opinion should determine that he needs therapeutic treatment or rehabilitation of some sort, I would recommend investigating an institution staffed by the Servants of the Paraclete in New Mexico. They have a reputation of being very effective in helping in the rehabilitation of priests who have needed help with such problems as alcoholism, drug dependency, and severe emotional problems.

If I can be of help in contacting the Servants of the Paraclete or some such other group, or of any help whatsoever, please let me know that. Thank you for your time and attention in reading and considering this letter. Yours is a serious and difficult duty, and I pray that God will guide you in performing it.

Sincerely yours,

[REDACTED]

51000411