

St. Bernard's Rectory

173 Main Street

Keene, New Hampshire 03431

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Most Reverend Odore J. Gendron, D.D.
Bishop of Manchester
153 Ash Street
P.O. Box 310
Manchester, New Hampshire 03105-0310

Personal and Confidential

February 20, 1985

Dear Bishop Gendron,

I hope and pray that this letter finds you well. With the recent announcement of Bishop Mulvee's appointment to Wilmington I am certain that you are quite busy with planning and rearranging schedules. In the midst of your own hectic schedule, however, I would appreciate it if you would take some time to give this letter your consideration.

As you may know, Bishop, shortly after my arrival in Keene a year and a half ago I entered into a program for the treatment of alcoholism. Coming to recognize this illness was a painful and difficult process to say the least. My own mother and father both suffered from the disease of alcoholism, resulting finally in my father's taking of his own life at the age of 52 while I was assigned to OLMM in Hampton.

My own alcoholic problem progressed gradually over a period of years, but began to become most evident during the year I spent in Hampton. At that time I entered into treatment with Dr. Henri Guertin-Ouellette, and, when I came to Keene, I continued seeing Dr. Guertin-Ouellette and became involved in an alcoholism treatment program in the Keene area. After a year and a half of sobriety that has been marked by steady physical and emotional development and spiritual progress I still seek assistance from Dr. Guertin-Ouellette weekly, and continue involvement in the treatment program here four times a week. Without this program of recovery I know that I would be unable to continue any form of ministry in this diocese.

Throughout the last eighteen months of recovery I have had some difficult decisions to make. Though I have experienced much growth in treating my own illness, I have also experienced a great deal of frustration and tension in my ministry here in Keene due to conditions and problems that center on the rectory personnel. Specifically, I have had a great deal of difficulty dealing with Father Houle. I know that you are aware of most of these problems, and I am not seeking a solution from you at this time since I know that no easy solution exists.

One of the problems that I am currently encountering is weighing the

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difficulties of my ministry here at St. Bernard's over/against my own need to continue the process of alcoholism recovery that I have begun. I find this parish to be an excellent place to exercise priestly ministry. There is a tremendous attitude of acceptance and support among the parishoners. My involvement in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and my participation in several programs at Beech Hill Hospital for Alcoholism Treatment in Dublin have been a source of much growth and progress as has been my relationship with Dr. Guertin-Ouellette. What has been particularly helpful is my close friendship with Mr. James Meehan and his wife, Lois. Jim is the administrator of Beech Hill Hospital and my sponsor in the A.A. program. His continual help and encouragement have been immeasurable and they have become, in a sense, a caring family influence.

At the same time, Bishop, I continue to find the rectory situation here, and particularly my working relationship with Father Houle, to be quite difficult - at times even unbearable. There are moments when I feel trapped because of my need for the support that I have here in Keene, and my dismay at the lack of communication and cooperation within the rectory. To be perfectly honest with you, Bishop, I have struggled with the idea of taking a leave of absence from ministry in the diocese in an attempt to resolve this conflict. I have learned in my program of recovery, however, that the desire to run - to seek a "geographical cure" - is more a symptom of alcoholism than a solution to it. I am convinced that both my dedication to priestly ministry and my need to be honest with myself would discount such a step as a desirable solution.

With the preceding as background information, I have concluded, with the help of Dr. Guertin-Ouellette, that it is imperative that I remain in this area for at least another year regardless of the difficulties that I continue to experience in the rectory. I have discussed this letter and this decision with Dr. Guertin-Ouellette and he concurs that it would be in my best interest to remain in Keene. I also believe that it would be in the best interest of the parish that I remain. I am signing a release giving Dr. Guertin-Ouellette approval to discuss this situation with you, if you wish, in terms of considering my assignments in the immediate future.

I deeply appreciate your attention and time in reading this letter, Bishop. Again, I am not requesting that you resolve this matter since I realize that your considerations extend far beyond my particular needs.

Many thanks for your witness and support in our common ministry to the Church of New Hampshire. I remain

Your Brother in Our Lord,

Gordon J. MacRae

Rev. Gordon J. MacRae

cc: Dr. Henri Guertin-Ouellette
Clergy Consultation Service

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