



SACRA CONGREGATIO  
PRO DOCTRINA FIDEI

Roma, March 27, 1979

Plaza del S. Uffizio, 11

Prot. N. 173/74

(In responsione fiat mentio huius numeri)

Your Eminence,

With reference to your letter of February 12, which you were kind enough to bring personally to the Congregation in reply to our inquiry about the teachings and position of Rev. Paul Shanley, please be assured that I am grateful to you for the exceptional thoroughness of this letter and the abundant documentation with which it was accompanied. Your presentation of the data, not only about Father Shanley, but also about the general context of the problem of homosexuality in the United States, gives full testimony to your evident pastoral zeal and prudent vision in the exercise of your role as shepherd of the Archdiocese of Boston. I can only hope that this word of thanks will serve as a source of encouragement as you continue to pursue the laudable goals which you outlined for us.

Permit me to make three particular observations about the matter in question:

1) With regard to Rev. Paul Shanley, the Congregation fully supports your pastoral decision to remove him from a ministry to homosexuals, which permitted him to assert a special expertise in this area not only in Boston but elsewhere in the United States.

In the report of your recent meeting with Father Shanley (page 7 of your letter), you state that "Father Shanley, a

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His Eminence  
Humberto Cardinal MEDEIROS  
Archbishop of  
BOSTON

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always, said that he was not teaching against what the Church teaches." While there is no doubt that this priest makes every effort to use those circumlocutions which attribute to others the substance of a position on homosexuality which is contrary to the Church's teaching and pastoral practice, neither could an unbiased observer listen to the tapes in question and conclude otherwise than that it is a position which Shanley personally espouses and seeks to disseminate.

Perhaps you will be able to find the way, through your prudent theological consultants, to analyze for Fr. Shanley this false pretension and to convince him of the need to adhere fully to the Church's teaching and practice in the matter. You noted that he is a "troubled priest", and you asked for our prayers for him; please be assured that you shall have them.

2) With regard to your analysis of the problem of homosexuality in the seminaries, let me again express my admiration for your long-range program to ensure effective measures to deal with this delicate problem. Furthermore, I offer my hope that your proposed letter from the Bishops of New England to the seminaries will produce the desired good results. Since you are member of the Congregation for Catholic Education, I have no doubt that you will be able to find there any eventual support for the effective possible implementation of this project.

3) With regard to the new element in the emerging "homosexual culture", you mention your own "belief that the every fact of banding together in such groups for social and religious purposes usually includes the recognition and even the fostering of homosexual activity" (page 2 of your letter). Your perceptible analysis would seem to indicate the need for specific measures on the part of the American hierarchy, especially those in urban centers similar to your own, to confront this problem. I would therefore be grateful to you for any information you may be in position to share with the Congregation about the development.

opment of guidance for priests and others in pastoral ministry when faced with the claim to ministry from the Church by homosexual groups, which at the same time often reinforce the negative value of the "homosexual culture".

With the assurance of my cordial best regards for Your Eminence, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Franc. Card. Ferrer*  
*Prof.*