

LETTER FROM CARDINAL HICKEY  
ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON  
5001 Eastern Avenue  
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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

June 9, 1997

Reverend Lawrence J. Madden, S.J.  
Pastor  
Holy Trinity Church  
3513 N Street, Northwest  
Washington, District of Columbia 20007-2622

Dear Father Madden:

During the past few months, Bishop Lori has met with you concerning a wide range of issues at Holy Trinity Parish. Those meetings were occasioned by your letter to him, dated February 24, 1997, recounting certain liturgical and sacramental irregularities which occurred at Holy Trinity Parish on "Unity Sunday," January 19, 1997. As you recall, Bishop Lori discussed those problems when he met with you on March 12, 1997. He met also with Father McCarren and Father Peduti to discuss their role in the problematic "Unity Sunday" Masses.

On April 16, 1997 and again on April 23, 1997 Bishop Lori met with you concerning a wide variety of difficulties at Holy Trinity. These two meetings were held in the presence of Msgr. Bernard Gerhardt, Chancellor, and Father Clement J. Petrik, S.J., a member of the Provincial's Staff.

As you may recall, Bishop Lori described those meetings as a "structured conversation." Prior to those meetings, you were informed that they would be recorded and that a transcript would be made. You were invited to bring Father Petrik as a representative of the Provincial. In addition, those meetings were organized around specific points culled from the Archdiocesan archives and from other sources. Their purpose was to obtain accurate information and thus determine what specific problems at Holy Trinity needed to be addressed. Let me add that, at the conclusion of these meetings, Bishop Lori sent you the transcript and invited you to make any changes you felt appropriate.

I have received also your letter of May 2, 1997 addressed to Bishop Lori, which followed up on certain points raised in the conversations in his office. Finally, I note that your significant and helpful letter of May 22, 1997, also addressed to Bishop Lori, is a part of this same record.

After reviewing all the data described, I now bring to your attention a number of general and specific observations, together with directives for addressing the problems which have been determined as having a basis in fact.

#### General Observations

1) Holy Trinity Parish is a vital and vibrant parish community. I recognize its many strengths in the areas of liturgy, music, preaching, social concerns and education of adults and young people. I also recognize

the creativity, enthusiasm and generosity of those who are part of your parish, including clergy, staff and parishioners.

2) Let me also recognize the leadership you have brought to Holy Trinity. Yours is a very challenging parish. When you began your service as pastor, we discussed both strengths and weaknesses. You have shown a willingness to cooperate with the Archdiocese and to participate in its life. For that I am truly grateful.

3) As I am sure you will agree, a healthy parish is rooted firmly in the life of the larger church. This includes a close and loving union with the Holy Father and a true communion of love with the local bishop. That communion with the wider Church includes the acceptance of Church teaching, including those points, which may be difficult for many to accept. It includes acceptance of the God-given teaching role of the Holy Father and the bishops in communion with him. Dissent is neither an authentic theological source nor a font of spirituality. Parish leadership at all levels has a serious obligation to help form people in the authentic faith of the Church - not in various theological theories or enthusiasms.

4) At the same time, it is important for everyone to understand clearly that Holy Trinity is not an experimental parish. As I have already indicated, creativity is an important strength for parish priests and leaders. The Church's rich heritage of faith, worship and service offers many avenues for authentic creativity. The liturgy itself provides for creative approaches. However, creativity falters when it is pursued in violation of Church teaching, canonical discipline or liturgical regulations. Moreover, I do not sanction an "elastic" approach to Church discipline, namely, small, incremental violations of Church discipline that aim at a gradual shift in Church praxis.

5) Please know that I respect the decrees, which have emerged from the 34th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. As you recall, you cited Nos. 9, 13, 14 and 19 in your April 3, 1997 letter addressed to myself. Those decrees pertain, *inter alia*, to ecumenism, the role of the laity and the role of women. I am sure you understand that the objectives outlined in those decrees are not to be pursued in violation of Church teachings or discipline.

6) As your May 22, 1997 letter indicates, it is important for parish clergy and staff to be well-versed in Church teaching and discipline. In addition to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, this also includes *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Code of Canon Law*, the *Ecumenical Directory*, various liturgical directives from the Holy See and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the *Sacramental Norms and Policies* of the Archdiocese of Washington. Parish priests and parish staff must know and accept the Church's discipline and understand the reasons that underlie it. No one in a position of parish leadership, especially a priest, should plead "ignorance of the law."

7) As pastor, you are charged with staff development. As you have observed, it will be important for you to devote more time and attention to developing your staff in their understanding and acceptance of Church teaching and discipline.

8) It is good to know that a group of fifty or so parishioners are meeting to discuss some of the difficulties which have surfaced. I ask that you provide this group with sound pastoral leadership and lead them truly "to think with the Church."

9) Let me commend Holy Trinity School and Religious Education program for following the directives of the Archdiocese with regard to religion textbooks and other policies.

Particular Observations and Findings

## A. Ecumenical Matters

- 1) On at least two occasions, non-Catholic ministers have been invited to preach at Sunday Eucharist. While accepting the good will of all parties, I find that those invitations were improper and should not have been offered. Non-Catholic ministers are not to deliver the homily in the context of the Eucharist.
- 2) The question has arisen about the propriety of inviting non-Catholic ministers to deliver "scriptural reflections" in the context of Sunday Mass after the Post-Communion prayer. Such a procedure is problematical and I ask that it be discontinued. I also ask that you and your staff explore other ways to observe the Church Unity Octave (*cf. infra*, #5).
- 3) I also acknowledge and accept your pledge to "...make clear to the staff that in the case of weddings and funerals no one but a priest or deacon may be invited to preach." This action on your part will prevent improper invitations to non-Catholics and lay persons to preach on such occasions.
- 4) It has been established that Holy Communion was improperly offered to the two Protestant ministers who visited Holy Trinity on "Unity Sunday." Furthermore, it was highly improper for Fathers McCarren and Peduti to invite them to distribute Holy Communion. I gratefully accept the public apology, which you and these two priests have made concerning this serious breach of the Church's Eucharistic faith and discipline. I also accept the promise of yourself, Father McCarren and Father Peduti that such aberrations will not occur again.
- 5) You indicated that you would contact Bishop Lori as plans for the 1998 "Unity Sunday" celebration take shape. I urge you do so long before those plans are finalized so that appropriate adjustments, if needed, can be made in timely fashion.
- 6) I ask you to carry forward your plan to study with your staff the Church's documents on ecumenism and the Eucharist. That study should include the Documents of Vatican II, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Code of Canon Law*, the *Ecumenical Directory* and the *Sacramental Norms and Policies* of the Archdiocese of Washington.
- 7) Let me commend you for your promise to review with your staff "a full presentation of the Church's reasons" for the teaching and practice with respect to ecumenical Eucharistic sharing. Let me also highlight your statement: "I will make clear to the staff that our own experience of friendship with non-Catholic ministers and our desire to be hospitable must not override our responsibility to be representatives of the Catholic Church and its teachings."

## B. Lay Preaching and Presiding

- 1) Bishop Lori discussed with you the various instances of lay preaching and presiding at Holy Trinity Parish. Instances of this include the 1997 Ash Wednesday Service at which Dr. Linda Arnold presided and preached, as well as a 1993 "Reconciliation Series" at which a number of lay men and women presided and preached. It is my understanding that similar services took place in subsequent years as well.
- 2) In your May 22, 1997 letter, you indicated that you 'heard' Bishop Lori's concern with regard to the reconciliation services. As you recall, Bishop Lori noted that some reconciliation services at which lay persons presided and preached included the sacrament of penance. They were the near equivalent of a "Form II" Penance Service. The Bishop was rightly concerned that such an arrangement blurs the priest's role as the minister of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. I regard it as a grave abuse for any lay person to preside over and preach at such a service.

3) The Bishop also expressed concern over lay preaching in the context of Mass, sacramental celebrations and Vespers. He cited both Canon 767 and the authentic interpretation of that Canon by the Holy See.

4) In view of those concerns, which I fully share, I appreciate and accept your pledge that "...there will be no preaching at any liturgical service (e.g., Vespers) by anyone other than a priest or deacon."

### C. Inclusive Language

1) In your meetings with Bishop Lori, it was determined that both the Scriptural readings and the Mass texts are regularly modified at Holy Trinity to make them more "gender inclusive." This also extends to the hymns sung during liturgical services.

2) You indicated that Margaret Costello, the parish liturgy director, is responsible for most of these modifications. You said that these changes are mainly confined to "horizontal" language and do not extend to "vertical language" - that is, the names for God. You indicated that the proper names of God, "Father, Son and Holy Spirit," are retained for sacramental formulae and blessings. Nonetheless, you indicated that, at times, the personal pronoun "He," and the possessive adjective "His" - when these refer to God or to Jesus - are replaced. In addition, your music director, Mr. William Usher, indicated that "Father" could be replaced with other images of God since fatherhood is "a painful image" for many people today. You expressed disagreement with Mr. Usher on that point and subsequently clarified that his role is confined to the texts of hymns.

3) It was further established that the "Canadian Lectionary" is employed on a regular basis at Holy Trinity. In addition, you indicated that the parish is already using new translations of the Sacramentary, produced by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy and currently awaiting approval from Rome.

4) In the April 23, 1997 meeting, Bishop Lori cited an extreme abuse of so-called "inclusive language" - a recasting of the Confiteor and the Misereatur. You indicated that form was used at Holy Trinity on one occasion before you became pastor. You also indicated that you regard such a re-formulation as unacceptable.

5) Finally you expressed your belief that you had special leeway from myself to experiment with inclusive language.

6) In response to these findings, I must indicate:

- 1) I have given no permission for experimentation with inclusive language at Holy Trinity Parish. Neither the clergy nor any member of your staff is authorized to change Scriptural translations or Mass texts.
- 2) The Canadian Lectionary is not authorized for use in the United States. It is no longer to be used at Holy Trinity, effective immediately.
- 3) Only those translations of the Sacramentary approved by the NCCB and the Holy See are to be used at Holy Trinity, effective immediately.
- 4) Extreme care should be taken with respect to the modification of hymn texts. As you are well aware, hymns are an integral part of our worship and must not undermine the Church's understanding of revelation.

### D. Understanding of the Eucharist

1) I am very grateful for your attentiveness to Bishop Lori's concern about the need "...to reinforce in the faithful the Church's belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

2) It is important that extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist be well trained in the Church's teaching on the Eucharist. Thank you for the steps you shall take to strengthen their training and their faith - especially with the use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

#### E. The Ordination of Women

I know that vocal dissent against the Church's teaching at Holy Trinity on the ordination of women has been both public and painful. I urge you to do all you can to help those you serve to open their minds and hearts to the Church's authentic and authoritative teaching on ordination of women.

#### F. Further Steps

I have directed Bishop Lori to schedule a parish visitation in the fall of 1997. In the course of this visitation, he will discuss the points outlined in this letter with you and the other priests at Holy Trinity, as well as the staff. He will inquire about your systematic efforts to correct the doctrinal, disciplinary and pastoral problems cited here. He will want to know the specific measures you have taken and their effect.

After receiving that report I shall review the state of Holy Trinity Parish early in 1998. At that time, I shall make a determination about the future leadership needs, both clerical and lay, of the parish. If the problems cited here are not effectively addressed, I am prepared to bring about necessary changes; but I pray that will not be necessary.

Thank you, Father Madden, for your cooperation throughout this long and difficult process. I assure you of my prayers for you and for your service to the Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

James Cardinal Hickey

Archbishop of Washington