

Reverend Lawrence Murphy
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COPY

12 January, 1998

His Excellency
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Piazza della S. Ufficio 11
00193 Rome
ITALY

Dear Cardinal Ratzinger:

I am a priest of the Milwaukee Archdiocese, living in the Diocese of Superior in Wisconsin. I am writing to you about a procedure which was begun against me by the Superior Diocese at the urging of the Milwaukee Archdiocese. It is a procedure concerning my dismissal from the clerical state, using the Norms issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1962, entitled De modo procedendi in causis sollicitationis.

My case can be summarized as follows: In 1974, I resigned from the St. John School for the Deaf, St. Francis, Wisconsin, in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, because of accusations of sexual misconduct. Archbishop Cousins, then Archbishop of Milwaukee, agreed that I could reside at a summer home owned by my family in the Superior Diocese. I have lived there ever since. My ministry was never restricted, but I received no further pastoral assignments. Because of my ability to communicate in sign language, however, I was called upon to assist in this area from time to time. Also, because my ministerial priesthood had not been restricted in any way, I also assisted local parishes in the Superior Diocese when called upon. There have been no further accusations against me since I left St. John's in 1974.

Nearly five years ago, however, some former students of St. John's began contacting the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, raising allegations against me. These were not allegations of recent misconduct, but were for offenses allegedly committed between the years 1963 and 1969. Some of the allegations involved solicitation in the confessional.

Without examining these accusations according to the 1962 norms, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee began penal proceedings against me, to dismiss me from the clerical state. When my Advocate, Rev. Patrick R. Lagges, J.C.D., from the Archdiocese of Chicago, pointed out that the time limits had run out for bringing such cases to the penal process, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee attempted to begin a procedure against me based on solicitation in the confessional. My Advocate again pointed out that the proceedings could only be instituted by the diocese

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where I was living, that is, the Superior Diocese. Therefore, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee prevailed upon the Diocese of Superior to begin these proceedings according to the 1962 Norms published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. A decree was issued on 6 January, 1998 informing me of this fact. The Diocese of Superior is using the personnel of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to prosecute the case.

I am appealing to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for the following reason: I ask that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declare the decree of citation by the Diocese of Superior invalid. The accusations against me were for actions alleged to have taken place over twenty-five years ago. This goes against the 1962 Norms which state that an action must be brought within one month of the alleged solicitation.

I am seventy-two years of age, your Eminence, and am in poor health. I have just recently suffered another stroke which has left me in a weakened state. I have followed all the directives of both Archbishop Cousins and now Archbishop Weakland. I have repented of any of my past transgressions, and have been living peaceably in northern Wisconsin for twenty-four years. I simply want to live out the time that I have left in the dignity of my priesthood. I ask your kind assistance in this matter.

Because of my poor health and the severity of the winter weather in Wisconsin, I will be visiting my brother in Houston, Texas until after Easter. Therefore, I would ask that any of your correspondence until that time be addressed to my Advocate, Rev. Patrick R. Lagges, J.C.D., Judicial Vicar, Archdiocese of Chicago, 155 East Superior Street, Chicago, IL 60611, USA. I have enclosed a copy of the mandate I signed appointing Father Lagges my Procurator and Advocate. I will keep Father Lagges apprised of my whereabouts until I return to my home in Boulder Junction.

Sincerely yours in the Lord Jesus,



(Rev.) Lawrence Murphy