



LINK UNLIMITED

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October 14, 1993

His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Bernardin
Archbishop of Chicago
155 E. Superior St.
Chicago, Il. 60611

Dear Cardinal Bernardin:

Thank you for agreeing to see me on October 21. It is my fondest hope that our discussions might resolve the limbo in which I have lived for the past 16 months and allow me, in one form or another, to continue in the mission which has been my life's work, Link Unlimited.

As you are well aware, the Board of Directors of Link, after an investigation of the "Summer's incident" voted unanimously in November, 1992 to reinstate me as President of Link. At your request, I have not returned and remain on voluntary leave of absence because I want to return with your blessing and as a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago. It is with respect to the terms on which I can return to Link as a priest that I wish to meet with you on the 21st.

I know, the Board of Directors of Link believe, and I sincerely hope you believe that I am not in any way a sexual deviant. I have no personality disorders and no psychological disorders, including paraphilias. I am entirely normal. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In addition, the publicity and communication which surrounded my administrative leave from St. Dorothy's Parish has resulted in no substantive "red flags" [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I have worked with thousands of young people over the past 39 years. Does anyone honestly believe that these people would remain silent if they had felt impropriety in my actions over those years?

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Then why am I in the position I am in today? As I see it, the answer involves two factors. One is the unfortunate rash of reporting of priestly sexual misconduct across the country, which has created an environment of suspicion and mistrust. The other involves my own honest acknowledgement of a situation which occurred fourteen years ago. That situation did not involve sex or sexual intent. It resulted from my sincere interest in the well being of a very disturbed teenager and was grounded in my work at the time with Genesis II, self image and affirmation, the pathology of the black family, the teaching of maturity and sexuality, and my own personal growth and demythologizing of the priesthood. Would the situation have occurred today in our current litigious and suspicious society? No. Do I regret that one individual, out of thousands, claims he was harmed by my mission? Yes. But the grounding remains valid. It has enabled me, with the grace of God, to help thousands of minority young people become viable citizens and mature, caring and loving human beings.

I attach a photocopy of a letter recently received from a Link graduate, which perhaps expresses better than I my mission in the African American community.

So this is the situation in which I find myself. Link wants me to return. The St. Dorothy's parishioners want me to return. You, your Eminence, have kindly allowed me to work in the background at Link and to spend my days at St. Dorothy's. The Review Board has read my file and, without ever interviewing me, as I have repeatedly requested, has informed me of their recommendation to you.

Their recommendation is highly perplexing, especially in light of the written comments provided the Review Board by 

Where do we go from here? I want to return to full ministry in the shortest time frame possible. On what terms do you believe that can be done?

While I feel I am fully competent to return immediately to ministry, I am prepared to make concessions for the good of all. I would, therefore, suggest the following:

1. I participate in whatever counseling you suggest is necessary for a period to be agreed by us.
2. Until successful completion of that counseling, I not deal with individual Link students on a private, non-public basis.

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3. I return to Link as President responsible for:

- a. Spiritual affairs, namely
 - (1) Young adult masses
 - (2) Genesis II
 - (3) Tic-Cor-Tec retreats
 - (4) Meditation Prayer Groups
- b. Workshops on racism
- c. The alumni association
- d. Fund raising
- e. Link expansion

Hopefully these concessions will meet with your approval.

I have prayed and reflected long and hard over this matter these past 16 months. I know I am and have been a good and zealous priest for over 32 years. I have been a healthy and happy person, dedicated to serving this local church. A characteristic that has been present all throughout my priesthood and has never changed is my willingness and desire to address problems and to be a part of the solution.

I look forward to meeting with you on October 21.

Your Brother in Christ,



Father Thomas J. Swade