

December 17, 1969

The Reverend Jerome C. Kern  
Church of St. Mark  
2001 Dayton Avenue  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104

Dear Father Kern:

With this letter, I am pleased to transfer you from the Church of St. Mark, and to name you an Assistant Pastor of the Church of Our Lady of Grace, Edina, effective on Friday, January 2, 1970. May I ask you to report to the Pastor, Father Baglio, before noon on that date, ready to take up your residence in the parish rectory.

The announcement of the change will be made in The Catholic Bulletin of December 26.

Finally, Father Kern, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all the fine work you have done in the past. At the same time, I pray God's blessings for your work in Our Lady of Grace Parish and always.

With warm good wishes, I remain

Very cordially yours,

Most Reverend Leo C. Byrne, D.D.  
Archbishop Coadjutor of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 17, 1987

TO: Father Michael O'Connell

FROM: Father William Kenney *WCK*

In late 1969 Archbishop Byrne informed me that Monsignor Gilligan reported that a married couple had come to see him, complaining of inappropriate touches on the part of Jerry Kern toward their young son who was about [REDACTED]. I don't recall if the boy had reported this, or if others had seen it happen.

When Msgr. Gilligan or the Archbishop (I don't recall who) confronted Jerry with these accusations, he defended himself by saying that he was wrestling with the boy on the floor, and there was nothing more to it than that. The parents were not convinced and demanded that Jerry leave [REDACTED].

I then went to Joe Baglio and Dick Jeub and confided in them about the situation. With some reluctance, they agreed to Jerry's going to Our Lady of Grace and Jeub going to St. Mark's.

I never met with Jerry regarding the above matter, nor did I ever hear of any more incidents.

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Saturday Sept 13, '69

Dear Monsignor Gilligan

Our life has not been an easy one the past [redacted] but because we have had faith & prayer, we have been able to count our blessings in spite of the loss of [redacted]

[redacted] My four children have been comparatively easy to raise - they had a good start from their father. I am very proud of each one of them & their father must be, too.

It has been most disconcerting to me to have had a recent intrusion on our family life.

I hope you can understand my feeling of incredulity. My instinct to protect my children has never been so challenged.

At the time (insert - of the incidents related in [redacted]

[redacted] letter) our main thought was what was the best way to handle such a delicate subject, knowing full well how

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damaging a thing it could be a what a mis-step could mean to all concerned. I am sorry now there has been so much delay & that we did not go to you, Monsignor, at once. Our concern for someone else has led to even more concern for our children & for ourselves.

With the hope that the instigator of our anxiety will receive help he apparently so badly needs, I am writing to ask that you let us know at once of any progress you may have made. I have known our Public Safety Commissioner William Carlson & his Deputy Commissioner Roger Conway well & personally for many years. Would it be easier for you if I were to seek advice from them? (insert - I have since talked to Roger Conway on a strictly confidential & unofficial basis because this matter is moving so slowly - he is ready to act should I ask

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him to.) The [redacted] & I feel  
too much time has elapsed  
because of circumstances & so  
we feel this matter must be settled  
as quickly as possible. It is  
becoming increasingly difficult  
to live with - I am concerned  
for my son's safety as well as  
the atmosphere at school (insert -

[redacted]  
[redacted] but has not returned  
to those duties since the  
incident with Fr. Kern in July.  
I have not influenced him  
in any way but let him decide  
with only the question "When is  
the [redacted]?" & the  
reply from [redacted] "I don't  
know." & at church - if he  
returns to the [redacted]

[redacted] <sup>Fr. Kern</sup> ~~somebody~~ about whom  
he surely has questions in his  
mind - what then? Only one of  
the many questions we have in

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mind.

Out of respect to your position  
& experience I am writing for  
the [REDACTED] & myself to tell  
you that should you find the  
task difficult we are ready to  
go to Bill Carlson or Roger Conway  
where we know cautious but  
hurried steps will be taken  
to protect our church from  
scandal & at the same time the  
basic worry of this whole  
matter will be taken care of  
in a most experienced &  
discreet manner.

Realizing that the written  
word is easily misinterpreted  
I am trusting such will not be  
the case with this letter. As a  
mother I am deeply concerned  
for my son as well as for other  
vulnerable children.

May I please ask that you  
let me know within a very few  
days your progress or lack  
of it & what your answers to

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my questions herein are to be?

Sincerely,



Your Excellency,

The foregoing is a copy of a letter mailed to Monsignor Gilligan (certified) about Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>. It was written one week after our initial meeting with Monsignor Gilligan concerning Fr. Kern. The [redacted] have written a letter to you in which I concur just as they concurred when I wrote the above to Msgr. Gilligan. We have met with Monsignor again on Sept. 29. He said he had contacted you & is waiting to hear from you. We respect Monsignor immensely. We told him we were going to contact you ourselves, trusting we would not put him

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in a difficult position by doing so. He said we are free to act as we think best & stressed the fact, which we appreciate, of your many obligations & duties in these difficult times. To us, as parents, this is an urgent matter & thus we have gone ahead in this further attempt to have it resolved quickly.

We have grown weary of waiting & trying to handle a delicate matter so carefully & are now begging for your immediate consideration. With all respect due to those who have listened & been limited in their ability to help, would that we had gone to you at once. Had we anticipated the mental anguish brought on by delays, we surely would have done so.



Your Excellency:

It is late to be writing to you about an incident that happened in [redacted] - but back then we never thought it would become necessary to go this length -

We are members of [redacted] parish and have recounted the story to Monsignor Belligan, who expressed his regrets and said he would contact you in the matter, and may have done so by now, but we want to expedite it by putting it to paper. We hope not to offend Monsignor in writing you, but feel such a sense of urgency about it that we must be done with it.

About the last week in June of <sup>we were visited by</sup> Father Jerome Kern of [redacted]

[redacted] The visit seemed routine enough - Father had met [redacted] & some of our children a few Sundays previous, on the occasion of the leave-taking of Fathers Sexton & Gally. Father

7.

Kern expressed an interest in stopping to see us & was encouraged to do so.

He met our five children that day

[REDACTED] and we did some piano-playing & singing, which Father seemed to enjoy.

On a very hot Thursday or Friday of [REDACTED] Father Kern telephoned, & asked he [REDACTED]

and asked if he might take some of our children swimming with him.

My husband rounded up 2 of our children and 2 of their friends.

- our son [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On returning home that evening, our daughter was gushing with enthusiasm, and our son was very quiet. Late in the evening, his older sister heard [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] talking & suggested to [REDACTED] that he should

talk to [REDACTED] He did, and he heard, sadly, in bits & pieces, the following account of the afternoon:

Explaining that the 2 beaches with life guards were too crowded, Father took them to a private spot not marked for swimming at Lake Nokomis. The two girls were happily left to swim by themselves, largely ignored - and Father devoted most of the afternoon to wrestling with the boys. On land, he would straddle my son, dare him to "pin" him.

But in the water, it was another kind of wrestling - in the deep water Father's hand slipped under [REDACTED] suit and over his genital area - after which the boy spent most of his time trying to avoid him. Three or four other times, Father's hand slipped into the trunks onto the abdomen, but [REDACTED] said he'd squirm away, or, as he showed us, pluck. Father's arm

way & pull it out. He pleaded a cold  
 & tried to rest on the beach &  
 Father would drag him by the  
 neck out into the water again,  
 or straddled on land. There was  
 one grab by Father on the outside  
 of his trunks, but [redacted] says that  
 really could have happened  
 accidentally so he thought there  
 was nothing ulterior in that one  
 instance.

His friend [redacted] - he had  
 one chance out in the water alone  
 to compare notes. [redacted] had  
 had the same thing happen to  
 him - he's a husky little guy  
 and his clothes fit him tightly  
 - only [redacted] had on jeans,  
 cut-off, a belt and underpants.  
 In the course of "wrestling"  
 Father's hand had slipped  
 inside & over [redacted] genital  
 organs. He is a stronger  
 swimmer & he spent all his  
 time way out in deep water  
 after the incident trying to keep

So, [redacted] who wasn't a strong swimmer, stayed on the beach with his "cold," said he couldn't look at Father's face anymore when he straddled him & thought seriously of gathering his younger sister & her friend & just walking off.

His sister, who had to be told something after that day, cause she said Father had said after his vacation he would take them again, cried out when we told her something of the problem, "Oh, mother, if only you'd seen poor [redacted] trying to come in and Father taking him by the neck and carrying him off into the water again! She also said when [redacted] would lie on his towel & cover his eyes, Father would move his towel over next to him. She finally understood why, when they both came in the house after being dropped

off, when she said "Wasn't Father nice?!", he'd answered, "Oh, yeah!"

So ended an afternoon's ordeal for our son and his friend.

After he'd poured it out to us - our ordeal began. The disillusionment, the delicacy of the matter, the position of the man in the Church, the necessity to be sure of what had happened that day - we proceeded cautiously.

What followed is too detailed to get into a letter. An insult to our intelligence

- Father Kern's attempt to explain away the incident.

He'd had a three week vacation by then, and though he's known for his excellent memory, it failed him completely on the events of that day. [REDACTED]

and both of us, were rude to him; indignant and, I'm sure, offensive. He never took umbrage, never expressed sorrow for the boys, felt

rather that if we would allow ourselves to "get to know" him & what he thinks, (let the boys go swimming again with him) he could make us understand.

He did not deny the incident.

He is a very strange man. Before that evening, I think our hope was that he would be most regretful and offer to seek help for himself.

In the three long months that followed, we carried this secret burden with us, to one priest, and another. We received regrets, advice, and, because of the type of incident, a reluctance to deal with it. It is a most unpleasant matter. We could leave him to Heaven, or call in the civil authorities, and we were seriously considered both.

Dather Kern has, in spite of knowing our feelings, called us once to invite to join his Adult Education Class & sent us the enclosed letter, and

continues to behave as if our problem is insufficient knowledge of him. The truth is we have all the knowledge of him we want and more.

Our sensibilities are assaulted at the sight of him dispensing the Eucharist, we try to miss his arrogant sermons, his effrontery in badgering us to "get together" is becoming intolerable. Not the least consideration, to our minds, is the welfare of the children of the parish - we would not wish them to experience what our son has.

We know there is no redress for our son - but your earliest possible attention to the matter would give us some small solace.

Sincerely,