

October 15, 2003

The Most Reverend Joseph F. Martino
Diocese of Scranton
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*(Bp. Dougherty,
Frankly, I take this letter
as highly credible. What do
you suggest we do? Thanks for*

COPY

Your Excellency:

I should like first to extend my warm regards and to congratulate you on becoming the ninth bishop of the Diocese of Scranton. This is indeed an occasion of great joy and even greater hope. As a priest of the Diocese (presently teaching at Fairfield University, Conn.), it is a fervent part of my daily celebration of Holy Mass that Our Lord pour forth abundant blessings and graces upon you, as He strengthens you for spiritual and moral leadership in the Church of Christ. Such divine assistance is no doubt especially needful in this time of crisis, when so many have departed from the integral faith and when the sacred priesthood has suffered public degradation due to the conduct of some of its own members.

Regrettably, it is to this latter issue in the concrete case of a clerical association of the Diocese of Scranton, the Society of St. John (SSI), that I must now turn. No doubt you have been to some degree apprised of the SSI's problems, ranging as they do from rather suspect financial practices to a federal lawsuit for sexual molestation. Inasmuch as I am a former member of the SSI and have personal knowledge of gravely immoral behavior on the part of its members, I wish with all urgency to inform you of certain particulars which, it is to be hoped, will assist you in finding an ecclesiastical and just resolution to the SSI debacle. It will not be possible, of course, to rehearse here all relevant information that sheds light on the scope of the SSI's misconduct. I shall try instead to provide you with a summary of facts and evidence.

What is beyond all doubt is that Rev. Carlos Urrutigoity, founder and former Superior General of the SSI, has had a long habit of bedding down at night with young men. Having lived for a year in the same house as Fr. Urrutigoity, I myself was personally aware of numerous occasions in which young men would spend the night with Fr. Urrutigoity in his private chambers. During special and repeated meetings from August 2001 to December 2001 with the following list of officials, knowledge of Fr. Urrutigoity's nocturnal behavior with young men was explicitly and unequivocally disclosed to me by Mr. Alan Hicks, former headmaster of St. Gregory's Academy, Mr. Howard Clark of St. Gregory's Academy, Rev. Paul Carr, former District Superior of the Fraternity of St. Peter, Bishop John Dougherty, and Bishop James Timlin. Bishop Dougherty referred to the sociopathic behavior in question as the "dorming problem," while Fr. Carr called it the "sleeping sickness."

Besides the current federal lawsuit brought by "John Doe," there was a previous accusation of molestation leveled against Fr. Urrutigoity by Matthew Selinger, a former seminarian of the Society of Pius X in Winona, Minnesota. Moreover, when Fr.



Urrutigoity was a seminarian in Argentina, he was accused of homosexual activity by Fr. Andres Morello, Rector of the Pius X seminary in La Reja, Argentina.

During my tenure with the SSI, I was more and more disturbed by Fr. Urrutigoity's occasional open intimacy with young men and occasional supervision of gatherings of young men (on the SSI property in Shohola) that would involve smoking and bouts of heavy drinking of alcoholic beverages.

In my first two weeks with the SSI, after they had just moved from St. Gregory's Academy to their new Shohola property (September 1999), I noticed that Rev. Marshall Roberts of the SSI was occupying the same room with John Zoscak who had just graduated from St. Gregory's Academy. (Fr. Roberts had a particular friendship with this young man going back to the SSI's days at Gregory's Academy, 1997-1999.) Fr. Roberts' room arrangements in Shohola (before he left for Cambridge, England) would not have been possible without the knowledge and approval of Fr. Urrutigoity, the Superior General at the time. At a later date, when many of us in the SSI were sojourning at the French monastery of Fontgombault, it was announced by then Deacon Dominic O'Connor (now Fr. O'Connor), who was the acting SSI superior at Fontgombault, that Zoscak had the privilege of spending time in Fr. Roberts' room after compline when Fr. Roberts would visit the monastery from Cambridge. I later discovered that Fr. Roberts had been dismissed from the seminary of the Institute of Christ the King in Gricigliano, Italy for the "grave" reason of having proposed an intimate relationship with another seminarian.

The SSI, and Fr. Urrutigoity in particular, cultivate close relationships with young men, utilizing spiritual means, the power of the office of the priesthood, and the liturgical treasures of the Church to attract their company. At first I was dismayed and perplexed that so much community energy was expended in this direction, in an occasionally less than edifying way and with explosive potential for scandal. Eventually I came to realize that there was involved here—as incredible as this may seem—a pedagogy, indeed even a theology, of pederasty. In a telephone conversation I had with Bishop Dougherty, he referred to this situation as "grooming"—meaning the careful preparation of young men over time for future sexual encounters. It would not be an exaggeration, therefore, to speak of the SSI as a homosexual cult, centered on its leading light, Fr. Urrutigoity, to whom extraordinary deference is paid within the SSI such as to distort the moral reckoning of its members.

The thesis of the last paragraph was graphically confirmed in a telephone conversation I had with a former SSI donor, Mrs. Diane Toler, who informed me that she received a call from Rev. Dominic Carey of the SSI in which he admitted that sleeping with young men had taken place within SSI ranks. However, according to Fr. Carey, there was nothing wrong with this practice insofar as in certain medieval religious orders male members would sleep with each other. Mrs. Toler, who is married with children and lives in an affluent community in New Jersey, struck me as clear, rational, and

entirely credible. Later I learned that Fr. Carey had been in the same bed with Fr. Urrutigoity the night the latter allegedly molested Matthew Selinger. I regret to say that Bishop Timlin has told a number of people in the context of the accusations against the SSI that men sleeping with men presents no moral problem.

As regards Rev. Eric Ensey, who once held the title of Chancellor of the SSI, I was aware that there was a certain bond between him and John Doe. I was myself acquainted with John Doe and found him to be likeable, intelligent, and guileless, while somewhat unsure of himself and insecure. When I was vocation director for the SSI, Fr. Ensey told me that he was John Doe's spiritual director and was sorting through issues with John Doe to determine his eligibility for admission to the SSI novitiate. After residing with the SSI in Shohola in the late summer and early fall of 2000, John Doe suddenly left and returned home. Given the very questionable SSI context, amply evidencing as it does a history and clear pattern of morally dubious, not to say reprehensible, behavior with young men, there is no reason to doubt John Doe's testimony that he was abused by Fr. Urrutigoity and Fr. Ensey. In short, his testimony is entirely credible. In fact, in February 2002, Bishop Dougherty in the newspaper, *River Reporter*, referred to the SSI habit of sleeping with young men as a "reprehensible practice."

Aggravating the whole situation surrounding the SSI has been an equally clear pattern of public dissemblance and subterfuge by members of the SSI in an effort to mask the homosexual disorder within. It is a matter of record that SSI clerics, viz., Reverends Dominic O'Connor, Dominic Carey, Basel Sarweh, Daniel Fullerton, and Rev. Mr. Joseph Levine, have had recourse to various dishonest tactics to deny or excuse the sleeping with young men, most infamously perhaps by claiming "overcrowding." I can personally testify that in my time with the SSI there was never a situation that demanded the accommodation of young men in the private quarters of a priest, let alone the need to have young men in priests' beds.

I have not yet touched on the well-known and well-documented financial recklessness of the SSI, which is itself a long story of profligacy. It is estimated that the SSI raised somewhere between four and six million dollars with now nothing to show for it but debt and lawsuits. Thousands of unsuspecting Catholic donors were lured into making contributions to a project that was increasingly recognized to be economically infeasible and, as it turned out, morally corrupt by dint of the SSI dealings with young men. Professionals in at least two different studies determined that the SSI Shohola property was not suitable real estate for the SSI's intended projects and that the idea of trying to build a medieval village there was ill-advised and impractical, short of a massive infusion of capital. To this day, the SSI attempts to raise money by exploiting the uninformed hopes of Catholics with respect to imaginary prospects for a Catholic village in Shohola. In the interests of preventing this letter from becoming too long, I shall omit anything further on this head for now.

Finally, I must address the very disturbing and painful issue of past diocesan protection (and even encouragement) of the SSI, despite mounting evidence of SSI malfeasance. A position has been taken which holds that Dr. Jeffrey Bond of the College of St. Justin Martyr (an independent corporation originally working in association with the SSI) did not report any immoral behavior on the part of the SSI *prior* to the SSI's refusal to allow the College to work within the Diocese *apart from* the SSI. This refusal was confirmed and supported by the Diocese in a letter to Dr. Bond dated October 15, 2001. (The board of directors of the College began to dissociate the College from the SSI in early September of 2001 after arriving at the conclusion that Fr. Urrutigoity was probably a pederast and that the SSI was deliberately overlooking his behavioral problems with young men. This process of dissociation was, of course, necessary at the very least to protect the names and reputations of those involved with the College.) Furthermore, it is claimed that Dr. Bond subsequently cooked up evidence against the SSI concerning the sleeping with young men as revenge for the aforementioned refusal.

Unfortunately, this position ignores the fact that both I and Dr. Bond, separately and together, met with the head of the diocese and the auxiliary bishop in numerous meetings from August 2001 to early October 2001. The very heart and matter of those meetings concerned the emerging scandal of Fr. Urrutigoity's immoral and sociopathic behavior, and the urgent need, therefore, to bring proportionate canonical sanctions to bear on Fr. Urrutigoity and the SSI, for the good of the Diocese and the Catholic public and for the protection of young men. Bishop Dougherty acknowledged that "strong medicine" was needed. He evinced a concern for the cult-like nature of the SSI and the likelihood of pederasty in regard to Fr. Urrutigoity. Bishop Timlin, on the other hand, played things down and would not allow that there was anything more than imprudence on the part of SSI members. The Diocese never confided in me or Dr. Bond that there already had been an accusation of molestation against Fr. Urrutigoity (by Matthew Selinger). I have kept detailed minutes of all meetings, and would be happy to share them with you.

Sadly, before the arrival of lawsuits, the former diocesan administration did little more than scold Fr. Urrutigoity and the SSI, while suppressing the College of St. Justin Martyr even though the College was guilty of no moral, canonical, or civil infractions. Equally astounding, Bishop Timlin has since portrayed the above-mentioned meetings as merely the airing of a dispute over liturgy between the College and the SSI, in which there was no mention of SSI immoral activity. How such a description is possible is simply beyond all imagination.

In the light of the foregoing summary of the case against the SSI, I fail to understand why any disinterested consideration of the very substantial accumulated evidence of SSI misconduct would require a civil court to determine guilt or innocence for the Church. Of course, it could be said that it was the plaintiffs who brought the matter into the courts. However, prior appeals to the Diocese of Scranton to adjudicate and to take substantive disciplinary action with respect to the SSI were shown to be

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without issue, and even to redound to the detriment and punishment of those bringing the appeals. Hence, by the time the Diocese proposed to meet with John Doe it had already revealed its unwillingness to protect the public from the SSI; and furthermore, the decision to send a diocesan delegation to John Doe that included the diocesan attorney could hardly be construed as a pastoral visit. Indeed in succeeding months, it was not beyond the Diocese to disparage the victim.

In questions of sexual abuse by clerics, it is gratifying to know that the Dallas Charter for the Protection of Youth clearly distinguishes between civil standards and procedures, on the one hand, and the requisite moral evaluation of the Church, on the other. Moreover, the Dallas Charter does not insist on a criterion of physical contact between the abuser and the abused. Apropos of this, there are already admissions and sworn testimony by young men that they were invited by Fr. Urrutigoity into his bed.

Your Excellency, I earnestly appeal to your objectivity, to the letter and spirit of the Dallas Charter, and to the Church's professed zero tolerance for the endangerment of our youth in the hope that you will bring the unhappy affair of the Society of St. John to a true and just conclusion. I do not believe that such a conclusion can only be realized in the civil courts or through a remote ecclesiastical investigation and tribunal. I truly believe, rather, that it is entirely within the competence of the Diocese of Scranton to judge aright the nature of the evidence against the Society of St. John, especially as it pertains to Rev. Urrutigoity and Rev. Ensey, and to act accordingly.

In sum, I believe that the Diocese now has the opportunity to take this matter out of the civil arena, where it has gone as a last resort, and to show to many that the Church has the moral character—and will—to rid itself of grave and demonstrable wrongdoing by the clergy. I know that the plaintiffs are not in the least interested in financial rapine; rather, they are concerned first and foremost with the due application of disciplinary sanctions to the Society of St. John as a group and to its individual offending members. If the plaintiffs could be assured of such application, I am certain the civil complaints against the Society would quickly become a thing of the past.

Please know that I am ready to assist you in any way I can in this matter.

With my esteem, best wishes, and prayers, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ,



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