

Office of the Bishop
(217) 698-8844

February 6, 1989

His Eminence, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Prefect, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Vatican City, Europe

Your Eminence:

I am herewith petitioning our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, for a dispensation from the obligations of priestly ordination, along with a dispensation from the obligations of celibacy, for Alvin Louis Campbell, a priest incardinated in this Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Alvin Campbell is unwilling either to request such a dispensation, or to cooperate in any tribunal process against him. He has indicated to me his reasoning: "Once a priest, always a priest."

Alvin Louis Campbell, the son of the late R. Lehman Campbell and Susan Campbell nee Winterbauer (still living), was born 12 August 1925 in Athens, Illinois, a small town just north of Springfield. His elementary and high school education took place in the public schools of Athens, Illinois. He attended the University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois, for one semester; Springfield College in Illinois (under the direction of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union), for three semesters; St. Louis Preparatory Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, for two years; Mundelein Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois, for one semester; and St. John's Seminary, Little Rock, Arkansas, for three and one-half years.

He was ordained priest by the late Bishop William A. O'Connor in the Cathedral Church of Springfield, Illinois, 31 May 1952. From the time of his ordination until 1963 he served as assistant pastor of several diocesan parishes. In 1963 he entered the United States Army as a chaplain. He was separated from the Army in 1978 for reasons which I shall soon explain. He was appointed pastor of St. Jude Parish, Rochester, Illinois, 10 February 1978, and resigned 10 July 1978 "for reasons of health." He was appointed administrator of Assumption BVM Parish, Assumption, Illinois, and St. Francis de Sales Parish, Moweaqua, Illinois, 2 February 1979, and was appointed pastor of these same parishes 2 July 1979. He resigned "for reasons of health" 11 December 1981. After a brief administration of the parish of St. Maryville, Illinois, in 1982, he was appointed administrator of St. Maurice Parish, Morrisonville, Illinois, 7 October 1982. On 20 March 1985 I terminated this appointment and granted him a leave of absence "for reasons of health."

Later in 1985 Alvin Campbell was indicted in the Circuit Court of Christian County, Illinois, for a number of crimes of sexual misconduct with minor boys. To this indictment he pleaded "guilty". He was sentenced to fourteen years in prison, and is now incarcerated under the authority of the Department of Corrections of the State of Illinois at the Logan Correctional Center, Lincoln, Illinois. I am attaching copies of the articles of indictment.

After the appointment of Alvin Campbell as administrator of the Morrisonville Parish was terminated by me, I sent him at diocesan expense to the Servants of the Paraclete, Jemez Springs, New Mexico, for therapy. He remained there until the time of his trial, sentencing, and eventual incarceration.

The circumstances which led to Alvin Campbell's separation from chaplaincy in the United States Army are described in the documentation enclosed. Sexual misconduct with minor boys occasioned his leaves of absence subsequent to his return to the Diocese after his chaplaincy. My predecessor, Bishop Joseph A. McNicholas, provided some psychiatric therapy for Alvin Campbell, but it was not effective in preventing activity on his part which led to his arrest in 1985.

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I am unable to assess the level of compunction of Alvin Campbell. As I have indicated, he is unwilling to participate in any process of dispensation or any tribunal activity which would lead to his separation from the priestly state.

His life as a priest had an aspect of isolation from priestly and adult supportive relationships.

Recently I visited Alvin Campbell in the Logan Correctional Facility, where he is incarcerated. I asked him to prepare a petition for dispensation, but frankly told him that I could not require him to do so. I spoke to him of the possibility of my seeking through the diocesan tribunal his dismissal from the clerical state. At that time he indicated to me that he had given much prayer, thought, and counsel to the matter, and would not cooperate with either dispensation or tribunal procedure. He recognized, however, that I might need to take certain actions as a result of my own prayer, study, and counsel.

Great notoriety has attended Alvin Campbell's arrest, sentencing, and imprisonment. His criminal activity and the civil suits attendant upon it have been highly publicized in newspaper, television, radio, and common conversation. Because of these civil suits and others following upon similar activity on the part of Walter Weerts, to whom the Holy Father recently granted a dispensation from the clerical state, (CDF # 342/88s) the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois has had to pay in damages, legal fees, and other claims, more than one million five hundred thousand dollars to date. In fact, all of the claims have not been settled.

Your Eminence, I believe that my predecessor, Bishop Joseph A. McNicholas, who died in 1983, and whom I succeeded as Bishop of Springfield in Illinois in 1984, sincerely tried to address the problems exhibited by Alvin Campbell, but the solutions which Bishop McNicholas proposed and supported were not effective in stopping the repetition by Alvin Campbell of wrongful behavior of a sexual nature against minor persons.

I genuinely fear the impact upon the pastoral condition of the Diocese from a tribunal process in this instance. My fear comes from the certain expectation that wider notoriety will result from such

action. Furthermore, such notoriety will have a negative impact upon the morale of the clergy, religious, and laity of our diocese and nation, already much wounded by similar instances in our recent history. I fear the infliction of further pain upon the victims of his criminal activity and their families, certainly to occur in the event of such notoriety or the necessity of their participation in the tribunal process. Such process, in any event, would have to take place without his cooperation, since he has already put me on notice of his unwillingness to participate. In summary, I fear that the Diocese will suffer further pastorally and in public relations, to say nothing of greater financial damage, if I proceed in the tribunal with or without Alvin's cooperation.

I indicated to Alvin Campbell that I am willing to provide him, upon release from prison, with medical, financial, and pastoral support as he would proceed to adjust himself to life outside prison. He told me that he has no need of medical or financial support, since he has a pension from the United States Army, which would provide him with both medical and financial support. He is currently serving a sentence of imprisonment of fourteen years. If he continues good conduct, he will be eligible for parole in 1992.

Your Eminence, I shall be most grateful for your pastoral solicitude in obtaining as soon as possible from our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, an indult of laicization for Alvin Louis Campbell.

With sincere thanks and best wishes, I am

Respectfully yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Daniel L. Ryan
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

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REGIAZIONE
DOTTRINA
MILITARE

00193 Roma, July 3, 1989
Piazza del S. Uffizio, 1

70/89s.

Your Excellency:

This Congregation is in receipt of your letter with its several enclosures relative to the petition you have made in behalf of the Reverend Alvin Louis Campbell, a priest of your Diocese, that he might be dispensed from the obligations of priestly ordination.

In reply, this Dicastery has to advise Your Excellency that the petition in question cannot be admitted in as much as it lacks the request of Father Campbell himself which is called for by the current norms.

To exclude the Diocese from responsibility for this priest, you can proceed in accordance with the norms of Canon Law which includes the delict of pederasty among those which are subject to particular penal sanctions not excluding being returned to the lay state.

It is considered opinion of some that, after the application of such a definitive penalty, the consequences of any further criminal behavior on the part of Reverend Campbell would not be imputed to the Diocese.

With best regards and all good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ

Joseph Cardinal Ruffini

Most Reverend Daniel L. Ryan
Bishop of
Springfield in Illinois

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