

July 13, 1961

Reverend Richard Hatch  
St. James Church  
St. James, Minnesota

Dear Father Hatch,

I have just received a letter from the First National Bank of Pipestone, a copy of which is enclosed herewith. I am sincerely sorry to have such information caused by a priest of the Diocese who does not have a full realization of the seriousness of contracting debts and failing to meet financial obligations. A priest above all should be fully aware of the seriousness of the Seventh Commandment "Thou shalt not steal" which certainly includes failure to pay debts. Such is a serious sin, a matter of confession and restitution, and one could hardly receive absolution without full intention of making adequate restitution and also repairing the damage and the scandal given. Such actions jeopardize the good name and reputation of the Church and particularly of individual priests.

I have spoken to you several times in regard to your apparent disregard and lack of concern for debts which you have and which you incur.

In order to relieve this particular scandal in Pipestone I have personally sent a check for \$95.20 to cover that obligation there and I expect that you will return this to me immediately. If I do not hear from you within two weeks, I shall notify Father Buchheit to withhold from your parish salary \$25.00 each month until this particular debt is paid.

I regret very much that information has also come to me that you have apparently found it necessary to take a vacation to Florida. Certainly one who is deeply in debt is not justified in expending money in such a manner. In addition to that, reports have come to me that you have taken one or two teenagers with you in spite of the advice which I gave to you at the time of your retreat.

Since it seems impossible for me to impress fully upon you the seriousness of matters of this kind and also in regard to

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your finances, I shall find it necessary to suspend you from all priestly work if I receive any further reports concerning debts which are unpaid or the taking of teenagers with you on trips no matter what the objective may be.

I sincerely pray that you will realize the seriousness of all of these matters and readjust yourself so that you may continue to avoid being a source of scandal to others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Bishop of Winona

enc.  
cc: Fr. Buchheit

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