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Most Reverend Richard G. Lennon
Apostolic Administrator
Archdiocese of Boston
2121 Commonwealth Avenue
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Your Excellency,

The occasion of this letter is the status of the “Protecting God’s Children” and “Talking About Touching” programs that are being conducted in the Archdiocese. I think that some serious re-consideration is in order. Yet before I offer my analysis of the above, I would like to congratulate you on the hard-nosed way in which you have approached the problems of the Archdiocese. Your openness and directness is a great elixir!

“Protecting God’s Children” (PGC)

I think that a few observations are in order:

1) If this program were in place thirty years ago none of the clergy abuse crisis would have been avoided. The problem in the crisis came not from the failure of parents to notice the signs of abuse in their children, nor from the failure of parents to complain to the Archdiocese, but rather the failure was in the response of the Archdiocese itself. Hence the claim that PGC is directed towards the source of the crisis is a diversion. This is not to say that the program is bad in itself; yet there are some problems.

*2) Just as in the case of the assignment of abusive priests in the past, pastors have been kept in the dark regarding PGC. (This is all the more the case regarding “Talking About Touching”). Just as pastors were not told that they were being sent priests who were accused of abuse and hence did not know what was being visited upon their parishes, so now **pastors have yet to receive the materials that the lay people received in the PGC program.** This is despite the fact that it is the pastors who have the direct moral and canonical responsibility over their parish children insofar as they are affected by the personnel and programs of the parish.*

*3) **Rash judgement has been encouraged by PGC.** The lay people have informed me that they were told in their training sessions that if possible signs of child abuse are seen the operative slogan should be “when in doubt, report”. This is specifically what cannot be done. This is rash judgement.⁽¹⁾ The slogan came from a pamphlet produced by some operative in the state Department of Youth Services. Yet the state law is quite clear that sufficient grounds are necessary in order to report someone for child abuse. In this it agrees with the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We cannot put aside the moral teaching of the Church because of some slogan*

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in a pamphlet produced by DYS. Our people were told that we should “err in the defense of our children”. Actually any errors in this matter gravely affect children, parents, and other responsible adults. That is why there must always be good grounds for an accusation and that one of the best ways of assuring this is to consult with others before the accusation is made.

*4) **No consultation with pastors was encouraged.** The lay people from my parish said that they were not told to consult with their pastors regarding reports of sexual abuse. How can this be? Again it is we who have the moral and canonical duty to form our parish according to the Faith, but we are to be kept in the dark that some child in the parish is being abused, perhaps by someone else in the parish? In the priests of the Archdiocese you have literally thousands of years of experience in dealing with people, yet they are not to be consulted? Would you if you were a pastor - a position that I know you desire, - like the idea that some C.C.D. teacher, made “expert” by this program in the parish, were to decide on his or her own wisdom that a child was being abused and hence report it, without even asking your opinion?*

“Talking About Touching” (TAT)

The problems only become more profound when the TAT program is surveyed:

*1) **Again, pastors are totally ignored.** I only first found out by hearsay what this program is about; and all the hearsay was bad. When it came to raising money for the Promise For Tomorrow campaign we were given great attention. But regarding TAT, since it is only about faith and morals and not about raising money, it is apparently not important enough to consult the very people trained in faith and morals who have the moral and canonical mission to form the parish according to the Church’s teaching: the pastors.*

A panel of pastors should have reviewed this program beforehand. In fact it should have been distributed to all priests for their comments. The examples of what goes on in this program that have been given to me by my CCD coordinator, which have been verified by published reports, are simply gross.

*2) **The program is filled with sexual references.** Here is one: In grade 1, lesson 9, the picture shows a young boy, Alex, looking warily at his “uncle” while both are sitting on a couch. The caption under the photo reads, “Let’s see how the boy in our story used the Touching Rule and the Safety Steps. **This is Alex. He was visiting his aunt and uncle. Alex and his uncle were watching television and eating popcorn. His uncle told Alex that he had a special game they could play. He called it the ‘touching game.’ He said, ‘Let’s take off our clothes and touch each other’s private body parts.’** Alex knew this game wasn’t safe. So, in a strong voice he said, ‘No, I don’t want to do that.’ Then he got off the couch and left the room. When he got home, he told his mom and dad what had happened. Alex’s parents were glad that he said ‘no’ to his uncle. They were also glad that Alex told them what his uncle asked him to do.”⁽²⁾*

*3) **The “latency period” of innocent children is ignored.** The Pontifical Council for the Family wrote in its 1995 instruction that “**this period of tranquility and serenity must never be disturbed by unnecessary information about sex.**”⁽³⁾ This document also says that when you do give sexual information to the innocent child prior to the proper time - and that proper time is to be decided and that information is to be given by the parents - then the result is that it “**tends to shatter their emotional and educational development and to disturb the natural serenity of this period of life**”;⁽⁴⁾ Yet for Deacon Rizzuto to say that this is not “sexual education” but a “rule-*

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based safety program”(5). is just plain silly. Parents can see right through this, and they are angry.

4) **The norms from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education and the Pontifical Council on the Family are being directly transgressed.** In 1983 this congregation issued specific guidelines regarding the rights of parents and the content of any program that the Church would offer regarding sexuality. It states that we are to be warned against materials that “crudely present sexual realities for which the pupil is not prepared, and thus create traumatic impressions or raise an unhealthy curiosity which leads to evil.”(6)

In 1995 The Pontifical Council on the Family reaffirmed such directives by stating, “The principle of respect for the child excludes all improper forms of involving children and young people. In this regard, among other things, this can include the following methods that abuse sex education: a) every dramatized representation, mime, or 'role playing' which depicts genital or erotic matters, b) making drawings, charts, or models, etc., of this nature, c) seeking personal information about sexual questions or asking that family information be divulged.”(7)

5) **Parents, the primary teachers of their children, are being ignored.** Parents have not asked for this program, and they are not going to just trust us. The days in which people simply trusted the Church regarding their children are gone. Perhaps in a few decades we can regain their trust, but this program certainly delays that! That this program has been used nationally does not impress them at all. That this has been used in other dioceses means nothing to them - and it should mean nothing to us. The merits of the program should be the only criteria which we should follow.

You would think after what we have been through that we would keep clear of anything that showed a lack of sensitivity to children and their parents regarding sexuality. But we delve into this program insisting that it is going to protect children. Where is the committee of normal Catholic parents - please no more so-called “professionals” - that has approved this program? It is the parents who are the primary teachers of their children, not the Archdiocese, or the parish. To quote the Catechism: **“The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable”**(8) The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education wrote in 1983 wrote that the family “is, in fact, the best environment to accomplish the obligation of securing a gradual education in sexual life”(9) And so on what ground do we simply tell parents in Catholic Schools (and in Religious Education - has this been decided upon?) that their children will go through this program?

6) **TAT undermines the authority of parents.** In the curriculum the children are told, “Sometimes grownups aren’t very good listeners or don’t know how to help. That’s why it’s good to have several different grown-ups you can talk to.’ This is something you might say to a teenager who has just had a serious argument with his parents, but you should never say such a thing to a grade school child, period. This is simply the reckless undermining of the authority of parents. It sows the seed of doubt in the minds of the little ones that their parents can take care of them. The Boston Globe recently won a Pulitzer Prize for its reporting on the clergy sex abuse scandal. That reporting included the many ways in which the pleas of parents were ignored. The parents were right and the Archdiocese was wrong. Are we now going to dare to undermine their authority?

7) **TAT will deal another blow to Catholic education.** Our catholic schools are already in the midst of grave difficulties. One of the reasons that significant numbers still use them is so that their children can escape the pagan sex education that is rife in public schools. Many

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parents have used Catholic schools as a safe haven - as a home where they could trust that their children would be respected and that their Catholic upbringing would be supported. TAT will be a signal that the barbarians are not only at the gates, but that they indeed have been let in the front door.

8) **The source of TAT is totally corrupt.** The Committee For Children used to be called "Judicial Advocates For Women", who in turn used to be called "COYOTE", which stands for "Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics". Do you want to guess whose ethics? COYOTE still exists - supporting the legalization of prostitution and generally the "empowering" of all "sex workers". They also live under the name of the "International Sex Worker Foundation For Art, Culture, and Education"(ISWFFACE), which is a non-profit organization.

I trust that you will look into this matter with all the seriousness that it calls for and with all the dedication that a good shepherd needs in order to keep the wolves out of the sheepfold.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. David J. Mullen
Pastor

cc: Most Rev. Walter J. Edyvean
Most Rev. Francis X. Irwin
Most Rev. John P. Boles
Most Rev. Emilio S. Allue
Most Rev. Richard J. Malone
Very Rev. Francis V. Strahan
Rev. Mr. Anthony Rizzuto

(1) CCC #2477: Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause unjust injury. He becomes guilty:

- of rash judgement who, even tacitly, assumes as true, without sufficient foundation, the moral fault of a neighbor;

- of detraction who, without objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who do not know them;

- of calumny who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.

(2) Talking About Touching, from the web page: www.catholicschoolparents.org

(3) "The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality"(TMHS), Pontifical Council on the Family, n. 78

(4) TMHS, n. 83

(5) Boston Pilot, 5/16/03, p. 3

(6) "Educational Guidance in Human Love"(EGHL), Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, no. 76

(7) (TMHS), n. 127

(8) CCC# 2221, see also numbers 2222-2226 and 1653. Also see TMHS, n. 64

(9) EGHL, n. 48