



# ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND

IN OREGON

*Office of the Archbishop*

August 20, 2015

Dear Friends in Christ,

I was as shocked and stunned, as I'm sure many of you were, when I found out Tuesday (August 18) that Sherwood Police had issued an arrest warrant for Fr. Ysrael Bien. Until the news of the arrest warrant, the Archdiocese's only information from the Sherwood Police was that there was an ongoing investigation. We only learned about the specific charges when the arrest warrant was issued. Subsequent news reports have added disturbing details.

It is gravely troubling to find out that one of our priests has been charged with criminal misconduct. To our knowledge, the police have not identified anyone who may have been recorded on the hidden camera. Certainly anyone in the parish or school community who has any information to help investigators should contact Sherwood Police Detective Debbie Smith at 503-925-7117.

The Archdiocese and the parish owe a debt of gratitude to the young man and his family who discovered the hidden camera and were persistent in ensuring it was investigated by police. We are also grateful for the diligence of the Sherwood Police department.

When I placed Fr. Bien on administrative leave, he told me that he would be living with a priest friend in Portland. It was not until July 29 that officials at the Archdiocese first became aware that Fr. Bien was in the Philippines.

On August 6, I wrote to Fr. Bien and asked him to return to Portland as soon as possible to be present in Portland pending the resolution of the investigation in which he was involved. Fr. Bien declined my request, citing reasons of his own health and well-being should he return. In an August 13 follow-up letter, I urged Fr. Bien to reconsider his decision, directed him to return, and assured him that whatever would be helpful to his health and well-being would be made available to him here. To date Fr. Bien has not responded. Fr. Bien's lengthy absence from the Archdiocese without my permission is a violation of canon (church) law.

Police investigators placed no restrictions on Fr. Bien's activities, nor did they ask for his passport so far as we know. In fact, the police made public statements that Fr. Bien was not a suspect.

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I'm as exasperated as you that Fr. Bien is not here to answer the very serious allegations he faces. I share your frustration that the nature of the investigation meant that the parish community and the Archdiocese had precious little information about its progress.

Some have asked whether Fr. Bien remains an active priest. The simple answer is no. When Fr. Bien was placed on administrative leave it meant he may not function in a ministerial role. Whether Fr. Bien returns to Oregon or not, a canonical proceeding will take place, the results of which will determine what his ultimate status will be with the Archdiocese and with the Holy See.

We will continue to provide updates to the parish and school community when new information is available to us.

In the meantime, I hold you in my prayers at this difficult time. The strength of the parish and its school is evident in the community's willingness to address these unsettling circumstances openly. I appreciate your support of Fr. James Herrera, Principal Kim Fadden and the rest of the school and parish staff.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Alexander K. Sample  
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon