

DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

VOTUM EPISCOPI

Most Holy Father:

I wish to present the petition of Father Stephen Kiesle for laicization. He wishes to return to the lay state and to be relieved of all the obligations of the priesthood, including celibacy.

Father Kiesle was born on February 14, 1947 in Indianapolis, Indiana. He attended elementary school in Lakewood, California and San Lorenzo, California. He entered St. Joseph's High School Seminary in 1960. Upon graduation he entered St. Patrick's College Seminary in 1964 and began his theological studies at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park in 1968. Father Kiesle was ordained on May 19, 1972 at St. Francis de Sales Cathedral by the Most Reverend Floyd L. Begin, Bishop of Oakland.

It does seem clear, now, with hindsight, that quite probably Father Kiesle should never have been ordained.

He has experienced a variety of psychological, emotional, and sexual difficulties during his priesthood. In August of 1978 he was arrested by the police and charged with having taken sexual liberties with at least six young men ranging from eleven to thirteen years of age during the period of November 1977 through May 1978. When he appeared in court, Father Kiesle pleaded "nolo contendere" to the charges. He received a three year suspended sentence and was to remain on probation for three years. He was to meet regularly with his probation officer. He was not to be alone with any juvenile, nor was he to work with any juveniles without an adult being present. He was also required to register with the police department of any city in which he would be residing. It was during this period of time that Father Kiesle took an extended leave of absence.

Unfortunately, from the time of Father Kiesle's first court appearance there was a great deal of publicity surrounding his conduct. Lengthy news reports appeared in all of the major newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as throughout California. Some of the publications also printed pictures of Father Kiesle. As a result, his case and alleged wrong-doings received maximum publicity exposure. Some of the newspaper accounts were able to obtain rather specific details of his conduct from the police report. Father Kiesle has been in psychiatric therapy since this difficult situation first became public in August of 1978. He still continues to see a therapist on a regular basis.

RCBO-KIE 0157

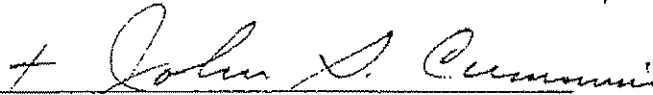
I would credit Father Kiesle with great cooperation in seeking out psychiatric help when asked. On the other hand, his dealings with me as expressed in his own statement unearthed for me the problem he had with authority and obedience. I had arranged with two neighboring bishops to provide employment in special assignments for him outside of pastoral ministry during the months that he would be in thereapy. He adamantly refused to consider these although later, on his own, he took a temporary assignment in one of those same dioceses. I felt obliged to point out the inconsistency of his judgment.

I prevailed on one of our excellent young priests to provide him a home with some possibilities of limited work. That assignment carried on for many months but it was obvious that there was no development either in work or in any other interests. I feared the wasting of time was profoundly detrimental to a man of his age. At the time, therefore, that he did procure a job of reasonable support, I asked him to take a year away from the parish and assume responsibility for the managing of his own life. That decision, as hard as it was, seems to have been very beneficial to him. I believe it has contributed much toward his present resolution of his life.

Given all of the circumstances surrounding this case and Father Kiesle's irrevocable decision to leave the active ministry, it would seem to me most prudent that his petition be granted.

Therefore, since all of these things are attested to in the Acts of the case, it is our opinion that this case should be submitted to you with the petition that Father Stephen Kiesle be relieved of all of the obligations of the priesthood.

Given at the Chancery of the
Diocese of Oakland this 19th
day of June in the Year of
Our Lord 1981.



John S. Cummins
Bishop of Oakland



DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

2900 LAKESHORE AVENUE • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 94610 • 415/898-4711

May 8, 1981

Num. Prot. 81/1s

His Eminence
Franjo Cardinal Seper
Cardinal Prefect
Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
11 Piazza del S. Uffizio
Rome, Italy

Your Eminence:

I am writing in the case of Stephen Kiesle who is requesting a dispensation from the obligations of the priesthood, including that of celibacy. I am writing from my experience as his pastor during the last three years of the exercise of his priestly ministry. My comments will be drawn from personal observation during that three-year period and from information that Father Kiesle shared with me for the period prior to his ordination.

In a conversation that I had with Father Kiesle after his decision to leave the active ministry he shared with me that getting ordained a priest had become something of a challenge for him. He indicated that his family was not supportive of his decision to become a priest and at some points even placed some opposition. The authorities at the seminary at times questioned whether he should continue his preparation for the priesthood. Steve Kiesle's attitude in response to these concerns from his family and from the seminary faculties was one of proving to them that he could be ordained. It would appear that his motivation was guided more by an effort to contradict the opinions of others rather than by a strong personal desire to be a priest.

I would have to say that this explanation, even though post factum, explained a lot to me. It was never clear to me in observing Father Kiesle as an associate pastor why he had become a priest. The bulk of priestly activity did not seem to be appealing to him. His interests in ministry were extremely limited and narrow.

During the time that Father Kiesle spent with me at Our Lady of the Rosary parish in Union City I observed that he was an extremely talented, creative and bright individual. He was also highly disorganized, irresponsible in following through with normal tasks, highly undisciplined and unmotivated to fulfill large areas of priestly ministry. His main interest obviously was working with young people. It was with great difficulty that he related to most adults. He did express some interest in liturgy and in teaching but was sufficiently undisciplined so that the result was that he did not follow through on these interests. It was almost impossible to get him to take an interest in the sick, in counseling individuals or families, in offering himself for activities in the parish that were unrelated to youth. He definitely showed signs of an arrested emotional development and of a limited interest in ministry.

RCBO-KIE 0167

Franjo Cardinal Seper
May 8, 1981

Num. Prot. 81/1s

page two

Even apart from the eventual difficulty that Father Kiesle had with the law because of his relationship to young children, there was objective reason to question his fitness for ministry and certainly his interest in it. Repeatedly, parishioners came to me expressing their concerns about him and the quality of his ministry. Father Kiesle is a likeable person and therefore did not normally anger or upset the parishioners. What they expressed more was a type of concern for his indifference and adolescent behavior.

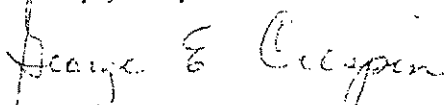
While I was away from the parish on a sabbatical leave Father Kiesle became involved in questionable relationships with young children. These incidents did not come to light until after my return to the parish. I feel confident that the Acta already possesses a sufficient description of the nature of the difficulties so I will not elaborate here.

I will add, however, my reflections as a result of this problem. The publicity which Father Kiesle received was so extended and so widespread that it would be very difficult to function as a priest without having to bear this burden. This would certainly be true in California and might even extend beyond this immediate region. Secondly, I think these incidents indicate in Father Kiesle a condition which would not make it prudent for him to continue in normal parish ministry.

Father Kiesle has been in therapy since these incidents came to light and I feel quite certain that he is much more able to deal with himself and with his problems than he was at the time of his difficulties. However, this very therapy, as I understand it, has helped him to realize that he should probably never have been ordained because of the lack of proper motivation, as well as because of his own physical and emotional needs. I certainly would concur with his insights at the present and would feel that it was unwise for him to continue in ministry. Also, I do not feel it would be prudent for the Church to allow him to continue in ministry.

It is against this background that I respectfully recommend to Your Eminence that Father Steve Kiesle be granted the dispensation which he has requested.

Sincerely yours,



Reverend George E. Crespin
Chancellor

GEC/er

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

3200 HARBOR ST., PITTSBURG, CALIFORNIA 94565

TELEPHONE 432-6404

April 25, 1981

His Eminence, Franjo Seper
Cardinal Prefect
Sacred Congregation for the
Doctrine of the Faith
Vatican City, Italy

Your Eminence:

I am writing to you concerning a petition of Stephen Kiesle for a dispensation from the obligation of the Priesthood, including that of celibacy. I recommend that petition for a number of reasons, but especially because of reverential fear or human respect and above all the immaturity and consequent lack of responsibility.

In June, 1971, Stephen Kiesle was sent to me, in this large suburban parish, as Deacon, in service for the purpose of completing his training in pastoral theology, and at the same time, to finish his seminary course as a Deacon.

He was ordained for the Diocese of Oakland on May 19, 1972, and was transferred from here on June 5, 1972, to be the Associate Pastor at Saint Joseph's Church in Pinole, California.

Stephen had a very domineering mother who was instrumental in sending him to the seminary and later in seeing him ordained a Priest. She was a prominent and active lady in social circles of a parish in San Jose, California. I am convinced that because of the reverential fear and human respect of his mother Stephen received the ordination to the Priesthood and his mother was then in her glory. Her status increased immeasurably. I believe that his commitment was not to the Lord, but to his mother.

Stephen Kiesle was a very intelligent, personable and industrious young man, and yet he lacked maturity and responsibility and spirituality.

As a Deacon here he worked with teen-agers and children in our CCD Program. They liked him and cooperated with him. Yet he acted as one of them: played ball with them; took them to outings and shows and spent time in their homes.

I was somewhat concerned, but had never received any unfavorable comments. Only some years after he left this parish did I learn of some improprieties that were going on while he was here.

RCBO-KIE 0171

Before his ordination I spoke with our Ordinary, the late Bishop Begin, that I was concerned about the literature he was reading, the magazines he had in his room, and in general his lack of maturity and spirituality. To me these were signs of some internal turmoil and the need to satisfy his nature, the need to share his life with someone.

However he was ordained and most probably my observations were not taken seriously.

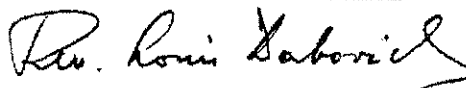
After his ordination I hoped and prayed that fortified with the graces of the Sacrament he would grow and mature as a great youth minister, for he had much to offer. But some years later I learned of his problems.

At present I am convinced that it could be detrimental to Stephen personally and to the people of the Diocese, because of the publicity, if he was not able to receive the dispensation from the obligation of celibacy. Therefore I humbly and sincerely recommend his petition.

Thanking you in advance for your favorable decision in this matter, and asking your fatherly blessing, I am,

Sincerely in Christ,

CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD



Reverend Louis Dabovich
Pastor



SACRA CONGREGAZIONE
PER LA DOTTRINA
DELLA FEDE

Roma, die 17 novembris 1981
Piazza del S. Uffizio, 11

PROT. N. 469/81s.

(Si prega citare il numero nella risposta)

Excellentissime ac Rev.me Domine,

Nuper ab hac S. Congregatione diligenti examini subiecta est petitio dispensationis ab omnibus obligationibus cum S. Ordinatione conexis, quae attinet ad Rev. Stephanum MILLER KIESLE, istius dioecesis.

Ut casus definiri valeat, acta compleantur oportet, ut infra notatur: 1. Superiores temporis formationis audiantur vel eorum depositiones scriptae requirantur, circa oratoris responsabilitatem atque idoneitatem ad Sacram Ordinationem suscipiendam;

2. Transmittantur documenta, quae in tabulariis seminarii asservantur circa accessum oratoris ad S. Ordines;

3. Exhibeantur attestatio iuramenti, quod attinet ad interrogatorium oratoris.

Una cum actis ne dedignetur Excellentia Tua votum de non timendo scandalo transmittere.

Aestimationis meae sensus Tibi obtestor permanens

Excellentiae Tuae Rev.mae
add.mus

Exc.mo ac Rev.mo Domino

Dno Ioanni S. CUMMINS

Ordinario

QUERCOPOLITAN.

RCBO-KIE 0217



SACRA CONGREGAZIONE
PER LA DOTTRINA
DELLA FEDE

Roma, die 17 novembris 1984
Papa S. S. Urbanus VIII

Prot. N. 469/84

(Copia di un numero nella risposta)

Excellentissime ac Rev. me Domine

Numero 20 hae S. Congregationis Afergenti ex auctoritate eiusdem Congregationis ad Ordinarium subdilectum Rev. S. Ordinarium Conventum quae obtinet ad Rev. Stephanum Williams Kildesherensis diocesis.

Ut casus definiti valeat, acia compleantur oportet ut infra notatur: 1. Superiores temporis formationis audiant et coram depositis suis scribere sequentia, circa oratoris responsabilitatem atque rationem ad Sacram Ordinaliorem suscipiendam.

2. Transmittantur documenta quae in tabularum scriptura continentur et necessariae oratoris ad S. Ordinarium.

3. Exhibeantur iuramentis, quod archinet ad interrogatorium oratoris.

Una cum actis ne dedignetur Excellentia Tua votum de non timendo scandalum transmittere.

Aestimationis meae sensus Tibi obtestor permanens

Excellentiae, Tuae Rev. mae

admiris

Exc. mo ac Rev. mo Domino
Dno Ioanni S. CUMMINS
Ordinario
QUERCOPOLITAN.



DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

2900 LAKESHORE AVENUE • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 94610 • 415/898-4711

COPY

Prot. Num. 469/81s

February 1, 1982

His Eminence
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine
of the Faith
Piazza del S. Uffizio 11
Rome, Italy

Your Eminence:

This letter is written in response to the request of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for some further information concerning the petition of the Reverend Stephen Miller Kiesle to be dispensed from all of the obligations of Sacred Ordination.

Enclosed with this letter please find a statement made by the Reverend James Laubacher, who was the superior of the Petitioner during the years he was engaged in theological studies. I would like to point out that Father Laubacher is now quite elderly and indicated to me in a separate letter that his memory is really quite weak.

We have also enclosed all of the documents which were kept at the seminary regarding the fitness of the Petitioner for ordination.

Additionally, you will find the oath which the Petitioner made at the time of his interrogation.

As I indicated in my previous Votum, it is my conviction that there would be no scandal if this petition were granted and that as a matter of fact, given the nature of the case, there might be greater scandal to the community if Father Kiesle were allowed to return to the active ministry.

I believe this responds to all of the inquiries which Your Eminence posed and I am hopeful that an affirmative decision might be granted in this case as soon as possible.

With every best wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

John S. Cummins
Bishop of Oakland



TRIBUNAL
DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

2900 LAKESHORE AVENUE
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94610
415/893-4711

COPY

Num. Prot. 81/1s
(Prefix this number to your reply)

September 24, 1982

His Eminence
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Prefect
Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
11 Piazza del S. Uffizio
Rome 00193

Your Eminence:

_____ This brief note is being written to inquire as to the status of a petition that was presented to the Sacred Congregation on July 7, 1981 on behalf of Stephen Kiesle, a priest of the Diocese of Oakland.

I was wondering if perhaps there is something further that you might need in order to bring this petition to a conclusion.

If there is anything I can provide you with, please let me know.

With every best wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend George E. Mockel
Officialis

GEM/kv

RCBO-KIE 0197

COPY

Diocese of Oakland

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: December 20, 1983

To: Bishop John Cummins

From: George Mockel

Subject: Letter from your friend
Rev. Thomas J. Herron

The case of Stephen Kiesle was originally sent to Rome on July 7, 1981. On November 17, 1981, we received a letter from Cardinal Ratzinger requesting additional information. The additional information was forwarded on to them on February 11, 1982.

We did not hear any further word; so, on September 24, 1982, I sent a letter asking for an update to which we received a response on October 21, 1982 stating (rather curtly) that the matter would be examined at an opportune time.

Stephen Kiesle's Roman Protocol Number is 469/81s.

Regarding Pat McCormick's case, we sent it to Rome on July 15, 1983 through the office of the Apostolic Delegate. We have never received any acknowledgement from Rome that they received it. However, inasmuch as Father Herron indicates that they have a case for a Patrick McCormick from Brooklyn, this is probably the same case since Pat is from Brooklyn.

May I suggest that you write him and give him the above information. (I would write the letter myself, but they never respond to "mere priests"!)

GEM:jcc

RCBO-KIE 0178



DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

2900 LAKESHORE AVENUE • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 94610 • 415/893-4711

January 17, 1984

*X-Filed in
Pat McCormick*
COPY

Reverend Thomas J. Herron
The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
11 Piazza del S. Uffizio
Rome, Italy

Dear Father Herron:

Thank you very much for your letter concerning the cases about which I inquired. There was no need to apologize for the timing. I appreciate the schedule.

Concerning the case of Stephen Kiesle, the Protocol Number is 469.81s. The case was sent to Rome on July 7, 1981. On November 17, 1981 we received a letter from Cardinal Ratzinger requesting additional information. That material was forwarded on February 11, 1982.

Our Officialis did make one inquiry on September 24, 1982. A letter of reply came from the Congregation on October 21, 1982, which indicated that no further information could be given at that time.

I trust the file is available. I hope something can be done for him. It would be impossible really to have him back trying to serve in the ministry these days.

Regarding the case of Patrick McCormick, we sent it to Rome, July 15, 1983, through the office of the Apostolic Delegate. We did not receive an acknowledgment from Rome. Inasmuch, however, as you have a case from Brooklyn for Father Patrick McCormick, that is probably the proper file. He served in the Society of St. Sulpice, but his home is the Brooklyn Diocese.

I would appreciate whatever information you can give me on these two cases.

Thank you for the kindness. Thank you, too, for the hospitality and the good amount of time you gave me when I was in Rome.

Good wishes for the new year.

Sincerely,

John S. Cummins

John S. Cummins
Bishop of Oakland



COPY

DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

2900 LAKESHORE AVENUE • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94610-9697 • 415/893-4711

September 13, 1985

His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Prefect, Sacred Congregation for the
Doctrines of the Faith
11 Piazza del S. Uffizio
Rome 00193 Italy

Prot. Num. 469/81s

Your Eminence:

This letter is written inquiring as to the status of a petition that was presented to the Sacred Congregation on July 7, 1981 on behalf of Stephen Miller Kiesle, a priest of the Diocese of Oakland.

On November 17, 1981, we received a letter from Your Eminence requesting additional information which we forwarded on February 11, 1982.

Our Officials did make one inquiry on September 24, 1982 which indicated no further information could be supplied at that time.

I would appreciate knowing the progress of this case and send my gratitude for any information you may be able to give.

With every best wish, I am

Sincerely,

John S. Cummins
Bishop of Oakland

JSC:jcc

COPY



TRIBUNAL
DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

2900 LAKESHORE AVENUE
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94610
415/898-4711

September 27, 1985

Most Reverend Pio Laghi
Apostolic Delegate
3339 Massachusetts, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20008

Your Excellency:

Enclosed please find a letter from our Ordinary concerning a laicization case,
Rome Prot. Num. 469/81s.

Would you kindly forward it to:

His Eminence, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Prefect, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
11 Piazza del S. Uffizio, Rome 00193 Italy

Thanking you for your assistance with this matter and with every best wish, I
am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Reverend George E. Mockel
Officialis

GEM:jcc
Enclosure (1)

DIOCESE OF OAKLAND
INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: September 17, 1985

From:  George Mockel

To: Bishop John Cummins

Subject: Steve Miller Kiesle

This is a follow-up letter to Cardinal Ratzinger inasmuch as we have had no word in some time.

GEM:jcc

Even though this congregation estimated for an important time the arguments submitted for requesting a dispensation in this case; however, this congregation needs to appraise considering it a good profit for the petitioners and also for the universal Church; and for this reason, it is unable to cheaply have that the granting of dispensation can provoke in the faithful community, especially with the young age of the petitioners. Therefore, it is necessary for this congregation to submit this case to be more carefully examined, that needs to require a longer time. Meanwhile, please don't omit the petitioners to follow the paternal care that is powerful.....



SACRA CONGREGATIO
PRO DOCTRINA FIDEI

00193 Romae, die 6 novembris 1985
Piazza del S. Ufficio, 11

RECEIVED

NOV 15 1985

BISHOP'S OFFICE

PROT. N. 469/818.

(In responsione fiat mentio huius numeri)

Excellentissime Domine,

Acceptis Tuis litteris diei 13 septembris h.a., circa causam dispensationis ab omnibus oneribus sacerdotalibus quae attinet ad Rev. Stephanum MILLER KIESLE, istius dioecesis, officii mei est Tecum communicare quae sequuntur.

Hoc Dicasterium, etsi gravis momenti aestimet argumenta adducta pro dispensatione in casu postulata, attamen necessarium censet considerare una cum oratoris etiam Ecclesiae Universalis bonum, et ideo parvi facere nequit detrimenta, quae dispensationis concessio in christifidelium communitate provocare potest, attenta iuvenili praesertim oratoris aetate.

Oportet proinde hanc Congregationem subicere huiuscemodi casus accuratiori examini, quod longius temporis spatium necessario requiret.

Interim Excellentia Tua ne omittat oratorem paterna qua pollet cura sequi, eidem insuper apte patefaciendo rationem agendi huius Dicasterii, quod procedere solet habito prae oculis praeprimis bono communi.

Hanc occasionem nactus, impensos aestimationis meae sensus Tibi obtestor, permanens

Excellentiae Tuae Rev.mae
add.mus

Joseph Carlo Rahinger

Exc.mo ac Rev.mo Domino
Dno Ioanni S. CUMMINS
Ordinario

QUERCOPOLITAN.

RCBO-KIE 0187

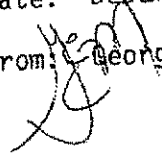
poll case

*George is Steve
very interested
in the laicization
- a is the
initiative case?*

DIOCESE OF OAKLAND
INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: December 12, 1985

From: George Mockel



To: Bishop John S. Cummins

Subject: Rome Prot. Num. 469/81s
Stephen Kiesle's Petition for
Laicization

My own reading of this letter is that basically they are going to sit on it until Steve gets quite a bit older. My own feeling is that this is unfortunate.

I see two options:

1. Communicate the above to Steve and see what happens.
2. Communicate the above to Steve and send a letter to Cardinal Ratzinger indicating that despite his young age, the particular and unique circumstances of this case would seem to make it a greater scandal if he were not laicized.

Please advise.

GEM:jcc

P. S. There was a note from George Crespin attached to this letter which I inadvertently misplaced. My recollection of the gist of his remarks were along the lines of option number two.

COPY



TRIBUNAL
DIOCESE OF OAKLAND

2900 LAKESHORE AVENUE
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94610
415/898-4711

January 13, 1986

81/1s

Mr. Steve Kiesle
3525 Savage Avenue
Pinole, California 94564

Dear Steve:

At long last, we have received some word from Rome concerning your petition for laicization. I am afraid the response is not too encouraging. A letter signed by the Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith indicates that they will need more time to appraise the situation in order to determine whether the granting of the laicization would be for your good as well as the good of the Church. There is also some concern whether the granting of a dispensation might "provoke some scandal among the faithful."

In trying to read between the lines, it seems they might be encouraging us to send some additional information and recommendation to them in order to impel the process.

The Bishop is willing to pursue this matter further if you are interested in doing so.

I would be happy to discuss this possibility with you in further detail either personally or by telephone.

I would appreciate hearing from you sometime soon.

I hope things are going well with you and, very best wishes for the New Year.

Faternally yours in Christ,

Reverend George E. Mockel
Officialis