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November 11, 2010

Bishop Larry Silva  
Diocese of Honolulu  
Office of the Bishop  
1184 Bishop Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Bishop Silva,

I'd like to bring to your attention a homily given by Fr. Khanh Hoang on August 8<sup>th</sup> 2010. A complete transcript of his homily labeled Enclosure 1 is attached. Please note that all italicized words are his own.

As you can see from the transcript, Fr. Hoang built the basis of his message on the concept of touching. While this may seem innocent enough, in actuality it is highly manipulative, intended to force parishioners into a certain openness towards touching, while at the same time implying wrongfulness or "closed-ness" on those who do not wish to touch.

Why this homily, Bishop? Not only is this message highly inappropriate in this era of abuse, it is wrong.

Fr. Hoang brings up the experiences of babies orphaned in South America, Henri Nouwen, and pop-psychologist Leo Buscaglia to support his homily. The problem with this, Bishop, is that we are not orphaned babies in South America---of course babies need to be touched! Bishop, we are families, mothers, fathers, and teenagers, children with grandparents and friends of their own. If you would only take the time to really know our community, you would clearly see the natural affection among our large families and friends.

Furthermore, after what had just transpired with Fr. Acklin's touchy-feely actions within our community, Fr. Hoang's homily is especially offensive. Bishop, have you not read the transcripts of abuse victims by priests and other molesters? They were told these very same things about being open to touching. Clearly, the modus operandi of abusers is to break down barriers while at the same time imply emotional dysfunction (i.e. too closed) if a person does not want to be touched.

Bishop, no one is saying that a friendly handshake or an occasional hug is wrong, or that hurting, suffering, or lonely people should be denied special attention. What we are saying is that open touching should not be pushed on us as a general policy....especially when in these dangerous times the young and the vulnerable are counseled to protect their private space.

I do recall a time when priests were taught to take custody of their eyes and behavior. Would not this be more appropriate than telling parishioners to be open to touching?

Bishop, the reality is emotionally mature people (including women and teens) do not need to be constantly touched nor do they seek to constantly touch others. Mature people know that touching does not equate to love. Nor does it equate to sincerity.

I have enclosed an article from the Star-Advertiser 9/18/2010 (see Enclosure 2). It is an interview with hospital chaplain, Al Miles, on this very same topic. After reading his interview, I came to understand that this man is truly in touch with island attitudes towards touching and correctly discerns the meaning of Aloha. Maybe this man could be called upon to share his expertise with our priests.

Pax Vobiscum

  
