

47 Maugus Hill Rd.  
Wellesley Hills, Mass.  
April 14, 1970

Richard Cardinal Cushing  
Archbishop of Boston  
2101 Commonwealth Avenue  
Brighton, Massachusetts 02135

Your Eminence:

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you home from the hospital and to extend to you our prayers that your health will continue to improve.

I am sure you often receive letters of complaint, but how often do you receive letters of praise? I would like to share with you an unforgettable Holy Saturday night and Easter Sunday morning that a group of us experienced. My husband and I were part of a group who served bacon and eggs, coffee and doughnuts to Father Paul Shanley's "Street People" at the Blue Hills. This was one of the most beautiful, but saddest, nights we had ever experienced. At midnight on Holy Saturday night a group of men and high school Boy Scouts drove to the Blue Hills to start the fires which we needed both for cooking and to warm us. An hour later couples arrived with 56 dozen doughnuts, 32 lbs. of cooked bacon, 28 dozen eggs and 25 gallons of hot coffee. Fr. Paul arrived with his "Street People" about 2:00 a.m. We wondered how they would react to us "square parents" and we, too, wondered whether or not we would feel threatened by those obviously on drugs. But we had a beautiful night, sharing breakfast with them, talking about places they had been, how they had come to know Fr. Paul, and the boys we had brought with us talked Boy Scouts with some who had been Scouts.

About 4:45 a.m. Fr. Paul gathered us all on a knoll overlooking the fireplaces for a meditation service, one we will never forget. He spoke to them of alienation, of communal life, the need we all have occasionally to be by ourselves to think of where we've been and where we're going. But what really touched all of us was the way Fr. Paul spoke to these boys and girls about Jesus--as if he was his closest friend--about death and resurrection and that this resurrection morning was a new start in a new day. Then Fr. Paul explained that one boy, whom he called by name, would select a torch from the fire that warmed us and fed us and that he would light our way to the top of the hill where we would light the Easter Fire and celebrate the Easter Liturgy.

The liturgy was truly beautiful and the participation was unforgettable. One of the "Street People" read the Epistle and they all shared in the Prayers of the Faithful, one

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remembering his homo-sexual friend who had committed suicide the day before, one girl (who I later discovered came from San Francisco) remembered her father who would not be with her this year, another his friend, Peter, who was killed in a car accident the day before. And so the prayers continued, painful but very sincere. This was an Easter Mass we would never forget.

I think, too, what so many of us found unforgettable about the night was the relationship between Fr. Paul and these "Street People." He is the epitome of patience and they flock around him as if he was the Pied Piper. Yet this is not a guru relationship but rather a feeling of, "When I'm with Father Paul I am somebody." Actually other than his homily and meditation service he said little to them but was always there to listen.

The effectiveness of his work was so obvious to us that the following day we offered to help him on a sustaining basis. Fr. Paul then spoke of his need for a building, that he had professional men who were willing to donate a-day-a-week or a day-every-other-week to help these children and he feared that unless he secured a building soon that these professional men would find other areas in which to work. Fr. Paul did mention that he hoped to obtain a vacant BRA building in the Government Center, located near a Police Station, which would be ideal for his work but so far he had been unsuccessful.

I'm sure the fact that Fr. Paul was able to obtain permission from the MDC to hold his Easter Service at the Blue Hills was greatly influenced by the fact that you had personally appointed him to the Alienated Youth of the City Proper. I know, Your Eminence, that you receive many requests each day, but if there was some way you could help Fr. Paul obtain a building for his work we would be most grateful. We feel that this Runaway--Drug Problem is our Number One Problem in the United States today and we feel strongly that a dedicated priest like Father Paul should be supported.

Thank you so much, Your Eminence, for taking the time to read my letter. Our prayers are with you and with all of the priests who are working so hard in this Archdiocese.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Robert G. Burns