



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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2 April 2019



Dear Mr. Peterka,

Thank you for your 27 March 2019 correspondence regarding the presence of Reverend James J. Martin, S.J. at the Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth, Wernersville on 27 April 2019, where he will present a public lecture entitled *A Good Measure: Showing Welcome and Respect for LGBT People and Their Families*.

I am profoundly grateful for your genuine concern for the Church and her teachings. I have made it very clear that his message is to be one of 'welcoming.' My desire that all be welcome in our parishes does not imply that I am 'soft' on the moral teachings of the Church. Welcoming does not suggest that all may approach the Sacraments, or that someone will not hear a challenging message in a homily. Welcoming that does not lead to the truth is a false accompaniment.

Permit me to provide some additional background on the specific matter that you reference in your letter. In the Fall, the Jesuit Center scheduled New Ways Ministry and Reverend Tony Flannery to be present for a similar weekend. I directed to rescind his invitation since Father Flannery was a suspended Irish Priest and New Ways Ministry has been banned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. At my request, they withdraw his invitation.

They informed me at that time that they invited Reverend James J. Martin, S.J. for a Spring 2019 conference. Regarding Father James J. Martin, S.J., please know that I have given clear direction to Father Martin, his Regional Provincial, and the Rector of the Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth that Father Martin is not permitted to create confusion or obfuscation among the faithful concerning the constant teachings of the Church regarding moral and sacramental theology. His presence presumes that Father Martin will present a message of welcome and accompaniment to those with Same Sex Attraction in accord with the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

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My permission for him to be present at Wernersville does not infer my endorsement of Father Martin. I will be closely following the content of Father Martin's presentation. It is my hope that the Conference assists people in how the Church can be more welcoming in line with the authentic teachings of the Church. Should his content create division, confusion, or obfuscation, please know that I will respond accordingly.

I have enclosed a letter for your information that I sent to all the priests and deacons of the Diocese that provides a greater context of the event.

With appreciation for your kind letter and with the assurance of my prayers for a blessed Season of Lent, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Alfred A. Schlert". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert
Bishop of Allentown

Enclosure



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14 March 2019

My dear Brother Priests and Deacons,

As some of you may be aware, Reverend James J. Martin, S.J. will be present at the Jesuit Center, Wernersville, on Saturday, 27 April 2019 to offer a conference on welcoming and respect for those with same sex attraction and their families. Father Martin has presented a letter of good standing from his Religious Superior, serves as a Consultant, Dicastery for Communications, and was invited by His Holiness, Pope Francis to speak at the World Meeting of Families in Dublin, Ireland.

I realize that some Bishops in the country have not allowed Father Martin to speak in their Diocese, and I too have prayerfully considered this decision. I would like you to know that I have made it very clear to Father Martin and his Superiors that the permission I give is for him to speak only on welcoming all of our Catholic brothers and sisters into the life of the parish. This permission does not extend to his obfuscating or confusing the authentic moral and sacramental teachings of the Church. Please be assured that should his content create division, confusion, or obfuscation, please know that I will respond accordingly.

Since my permission is not at the same time an endorsement, *The A.D. Times* is not accepting advertisement for this event in our diocesan newspaper. However, the Jesuit Center may reach out to you with a proposed bulletin announcement regarding this Conference. I leave it your pastoral judgment as to its inclusion in your local parish bulletin.

Please know of my prayers for your pastoral work and for your personal priestly life as together we seek to do God's Will of feeding the flock of Christ entrusted to us.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert
Bishop of Allentown