

Re: Father Janssen

July 14, 1953

Your Excellency:

Yesterday morning (Monday, July 13) I received a call by phone from Father DeCoursey from Fairfield. Father DeCoursey had just had a long talk with Father Janssen, just recently appointed to East Pleasant Plain. Father Janssen came over to confide in Father DeCoursey.

Father DeCoursey reported that Father Janssen was in a very distraught state of mind. He was all upset and gave every evidence of being on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The difficulty is the loneliness of the place at East Pleasant Plain. Father Janssen seems to have an obsession against the place. He doesn't eat because his stomach is tied up in a knot; he can't sleep.

Father DeCoursey advised him to go back to East Pleasant Plain and speak to Father Wetzstein. It just happened that Father Wetzstein was in Fort Madison for the day straightening out some matters concerned with his mother's recent death. Father Wetzstein did return to East Pleasant Plain.

I heard nothing more until about 3:30 that same afternoon (yesterday, Monday, July 13) when Father DeCoursey again called me and asked if I could come down. I arranged to meet at Fairfield the same evening.

I had an opportunity to speak to Father Janssen alone. It seems that he has never liked the country, even as a boy he loathed his uncle's farm. His primary interest he says, is youth. He wants to be with them; he wants them around. There must be something going on. At East Pleasant Plain this opportunity just doesn't seem to present itself.

I inquired whether he came to East Pleasant Plain with some preconceived ideas against the place or the Pastor. He assured me he had no misgivings about the place before he came and that he has nothing against Father Wetzstein. When he arrived he says the place just got him. He gets so nervous that he wants to scream, and he did just that once. He says that he just has to have people around himself.

I tried to impress upon him the golden opportunity he had to learn about the country, its problems, its people, as a preparation for the country parish he would undoubtedly someday receive as an assignment.

His attitude of mind is wrong. There is an evident lack of maturity, a failure to meet a situation and acclimate himself to it. Because of this lack of prudence there is always the danger of him leaving. In fact he (Father Janssen) did mention thinking of this possibility when he was so distraught in mind.

I spoke to Father Wetzstein and he mentioned the fact that Father Janssen had eaten little or nothing over the week-end. After confessions on Saturday evening Father Janssen got up and left. Later Father Wetzstein learned that he had gone to Brighton to a show. Father Wetzstein had spoken to him and tried to make him welcome.

As a parting promise, Father Janssen said he would remain at his assignment. I promised that I would speak to Your Excellency about the problem. I made no promises whatsoever.

I am, hoping that in the meanwhile Father Janssen has overcome his antipathy to the place and has begun to acclimate himself. From my experience of yesterday and last evening I am rather pessimistic about this possibility.

Father Dingman

July 24, 1953
Earlier in the week I heard that
Father Janssen had arrived back in
town on Sunday. I have made no
attempt to get in touch with him.
MJD