



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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February 28, 2012

Dear Ms. Johnson,

Monsignor Michael Fisher, the archdiocesan secretary for ministerial leadership, shared with me the conversation he had with you regarding the difficult circumstances surrounding your mother's funeral and the personal hurt you experienced.

In my years as a priest, I have encountered many pastoral situations and know that kindness to those experiencing personal loss is a necessary part of the Church's call to charity. The fact that you did not experience this is a cause of great concern and personal regret to me. It is understandable that you and your family would expect the funeral of your mother to be a time of fond remembrance of her life and comfort from the Church in the midst of family grief. I am sorry that what should have been a celebration of your mother's life, in light of her faith in Jesus Christ, was overshadowed by a lack of pastoral sensitivity.

I hope that healing and reconciliation with the Church might be possible for you and any others who were affected by this experience. In the meantime, I will offer Mass for the happy repose of your mother's soul. May God bring you and your family comfort in your grief and hope in the Resurrection.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Barry Knestout
Auxiliary Bishop/Vicar General
Archdiocese of Washington