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Sunday, May 12, 1996

Dear Betty,

As this is Mother's day, I think I must first express the hope that you are receiving greetings appropriate to this day, such as phone calls, even as I write. I realize that kind of narrows your "window of opportunity" to hear from those who call you "Mother." Gerard's whereabouts is unknown, according to your letter sent in early February, and Michael's in Peru, Bolivia, or Guatemala (???), not in a good position to telephone you. That leaves only Jeanne, who I'm sure **will** talk to you this day. That will help to put you in the spirit of the day at least, though it leaves you short of the "dinner out" that so many mothers enjoy on this occasion. Whatever the case, it is my wish that the day proves a pleasant one for you.

My second comment to you is to say that I regret my delay in acknowledging your February letter. I was not offended or upset at receiving your thoughts and observations concerning the news about my daughter Dorothy's public announcement of her "marriage" to another woman. My delay was based on simply my normal practice of handling only one problem or project at a time, as I don't feel at ease trying to keep three or four balls juggling in the air at one time. This year, as so many others past, has been particularly pressing on my time, because of my "book" project, taxes and finances, a certain amount of volunteer work, and the usual household repair, maintenance or replacement demands that home ownership entails for the common people. But now your writing must be recognized.

My third remark is to make clear that I am not going to treat your letter as requiring an analysis and response from me for every thought and suggestion advanced in your letter. In respect to this I view your letter as a thoughtful expression of concern for both Dorothy and me. Your letter was, I believe, a work of considerable effort and deep introspection on your part, requiring you literally and possibly somewhat painfully to relive your own reactions and adaptations to a similar yet different experience. I appreciate very much the work you put into the letter. I must tell you, however, that I view the situation between Dorothy and me as, say, a "work in progress," meaning the future **may** bring a shift in my current perception of what is my appropriate treatment of her situation. I do **not** mean to imply that there **will be** a change in my position as I have relayed it to her, given my own need to be true to myself and my very strong beliefs and views on her professed lifestyle. Having said that, I need to add that I sense from your letter that you have drawn some wrong impressions, or even conclusions, about my views and attitudes in this situation. That is understandable, as you have not been a party to the developments in this situation but must view it necessarily from the basis of Ronnie's narration of events and communications that took place, and also from the platform of your own experiences and decisions concerning your son Michael. Therefore I will comment on a few items your letter has raised in my mind for consideration.

For one thing, I am not flagellating myself about Dorothy's condition, wondering where I or others went wrong in dealing with her. I feel no guilt in what has happened, or any sense of personal shame (but also no urge to shout the relationship to the world). Furthermore, Dorothy's revelation of her lesbianism was not a complete surprise to me, as I had entertained some suspicion about that for several years, arising from certain observations I had made and from topics of discussion with her. For me the very disturbing news at her "coming out" was that she and her lover had decided to be mothers, obviously through the help of medical technology. I was thankful that the birth mother was not to be Dorothy. I have no bad feeling toward the baby who was born in due time, or the least antagonism concerning the infant. I prayed for her well being and safe delivery, when informed in the seventh or eighth month of gestation about her existence in her mother's womb. I have communicated in writing that Dorothy is loved and is welcome in this house and at family gatherings, but not with her lover or the baby. To me, the child she and her partner have contrived to bring about is the product of an utterly immoral proceeding (the baby itself being innocent), and their living together in an "uncelibate" manner is similarly blameworthy. By my current standards there is no way that I want to be seen as accepting, condoning, excusing, or even "understanding" the scenario into which Dorothy and her companion have transported themselves. I have written to her that I see many difficulties ahead for them and the girlchild (though I do not wish this to befall them). In keeping with my belief that accommodating oneself to error does nothing to stem the advance and eventual insinuation of error into society's acceptance of it as normal, I do not want to show any social behavior, publicly or privately, that appears to support those engaging in the error. Thus my restrictions on Dorothy introducing into my life her lover or the baby she "mothers." I have made it clear that she may do as she pleases with others, including family, in such regard, but doing it to me will only serve to stress the relationship between us, already weakened, that I think we both want to preserve and strengthen where possible.

Betty, I won't go on with more comments as I think you have enough to make some conclusions about my inclination (or absence thereof) to shift my position on these moral issues. I will say in finishing that I found your narration of your work with gays and AIDS clients, and your sessions with your dying supervisor to be particularly moving. Surely your comments to the supervisor must have helped this man in his last days to reconcile himself to his Maker and to believe that his good works outweighed whatever guilt in sin he had. I think they did.

Dorothy has said she has to do what she thinks she must, to be true to herself. That holds also for me; sometimes it's known as Tough Love, because it insists on setting limits and boundaries to behavior and relationships. I have no anger about all this; on the contrary, I think of my daughter every day and she is constantly in my prayers for happiness and salvation.

My love and thanks to you, dear sister.

Frank