April 16. 1882

My dear Msgr. Rouse,

You will remember a conversation we had in the Sacristy of the Pro Cathedral, when in one of the Society papers a fiction as to my life forty years ago was published as “a whispered tradition,” in the Diocese. I wish to leave in your hands a statement which I would ask you to use if you should ever see or hear again the same foolish fabrication.

In 1838 a family came to live in The Family House at Lavington. The Church is literally in the Garden.

My house was 200 yards distant.
I said the Morning & Evening Service in the Church daily. The family from the house was always present.
We met daily therefore twice and became very intimate.
There was not another family of education in the Parish: nor for miles round. This daily meeting & growing intimacy made me fear that some complication & misunderstanding might arise.

From the year 1837 I believed that God had called me to live the life of a Priest.
I therefore told the mother about 1841 that such was my conviction & intention: that I was afraid lest some misunderstanding through our intimacy should arise: that if with this knowledge she thought it had better cease, it should cease if she saw no risk or danger she might say so. I desired her to make this known to her daughter.
She said that she saw no reason why our intimacy should cease: with this full understanding on both sides.
I took care that this should be fully known to the daughter also.
And from that hour there never was for one moment any thought of the kind: nor so far I know or believe had there ever been. My act was one of precaution.

About the year 1846, the daughter came to confession to me, & to 1851 continued ever after. In 1851 I received her into the Church & continued to direct her down to the time of her marriage.

More complete intimacy, without a shade of any other thought, could hardly exist.
Two of her friends are now living to whom she made known all I have written in this letter. One of them, commenting very indignantly upon the paragraph in the Newspaper, told me the other day that she had this narrative from her own lips.
I have a reason for asking you to be the guardian of this truth, which I will tell you.
Believe me, my own Msgr. Rouse.

Yours [...],
H. E. Card. Archbishop

Transcription developed by Cheryl Timms Strauss