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1ST AUGUST 85

The Most Rev. R.A. Mulkearns D.D.,
 Bishop of Ballarat,
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My Lord Bishop,

Writing letters has not always been one of my better habits so I hope you will excuse me for not writing sooner. Apart from laziness and vacation, I did want to get into here and really be able to assess the doctoral program at U.T.S. first hand so I could be less vague about it when I wrote.

Practically speaking the program seems to be very good - the pre-requisite of working in a parish concurrently and as a context, is obviously beneficial - in that one learns and tests as one proceeds towards the thesis style final document. One chooses a special area or project to focus on, then one gathers a lay team to help research and eventually impliment. At the same time we must seek out the necessary expert resources and previous work done in the area chosen, to help formulate the program design, or project implimentation. Constant consultation with a faculty advisor is necessary, plus meeting with the lay team. The eventual aims seek a theological and pastoral understanding as well as a practical. I enclose a couple of pages from the handbook that might sum this up better. The hope is that one ends up with a bett expertise both personally, spiritually and professionally.

Fr. Joe Goetz, the pastor here, is on the board of admissions to the program, and he feels it is a worthwhile program. His assistant, who is an old classmate of mine from C.U.A. is undertaking the program already and he is pleased with it

Having said all that, I am conscious of some questions and, advice you might like to give me. I know when you released me to come here, you were concerned about future manpower etc. Subsequent to my being here, I have learnt from Paddy Bohan that Mons McKenzie has had to retire early. Also I hear Max Slater is still not well and that Jape Kelly is back in hospital. Paddy said the Cathedral was one short and I see from a Bulletin (St. Joes) that the guys there had to supply in July because it was too difficult to get supplies. ^NConsequently I am wondering if my absence is causing unneccessary overload ... not that I want that to read as if I was the answer to the

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diocese's manpower problems! Far from it. However I do appreciate that my continued absence ought not be a selfish one, causing undue burdens on others, when perhaps my presence might help alleviate somewhat. The benefit of the academic here has to be weighed against that and I am not sure that the former would'nt be found wanting.

As to what I consider the primary object of my coming here - to sort myself out and really get in touch with my feelings .. I can happily say I have gone a long way to resolving that. Perhaps I had to get away to realise that. Not that it has'nt been great being back with good friends and doing all the things I hoped for, because it has. BUT I know my place is in the diocese and I think very well I have learnt how to let go of here, and yet not feel I have lost what was so good for me in friends or experiences. Perhaps part of my blindness was described well by Paddy Bohan in a really kind letter to me, saying how hard it is to leave one's first parish etc. He related some of his own feelings on the subject. I wonder if St. Francis' description 'brother ass' could be attached to me. Not that I regret the time spent here - I have used a lot of it to think and pray about things. I find myself a lot more at peace, and at ease with the future working as a priest. I feel more confident coping with my doubts and uncertainties etc. And I look forward to getting home and being a part of the diocese again whenever. I am pleased I can feel that way - its new for me or if its been there I was'nt in touch with it. Funnily enough, one thing that has helped me occurred before I left .. and that was our renovation of St. Joes... I love my art and its important to me .. and I did'nt really get a chance to enjoy that enough !! I am grateful to God for being able to give Him praise in that way.

One of the academic goals I had hoped to pursue was concerning the formulation of ways and means for others to build liturgy committees, complemented with the necessary resources for self education and updating .. in light of law, theology, doctrine and good liturgical practice and instructions. To do that here I dont think will be possible ...

(1) this parish uses a commission principle .. only staff are basically used and responsible.

.. this seems a trend ... my problem is that it does'nt use a wide selection of lay involvement other than the heads of lectors, servers & eucharistic ministers. The doctoral program requires we involve laity and impart skills to them as one of the objectives. Under the program, with its schedule of research, training and design of program before implimentation and testing, for me to do this would take too long.. .. it might be different if there was an established committee ... it would take a liturgical calendar year after the initial research etc. This would take me well into 1987 .. too long I think. The doctoral program requires we attend 4 intensive seminars (AUGUST & JANUARY each year)... AS MY 4th would be in January 87, I had set that as my limit ... I would return then, bringing my thesis to be worked on at home. Now I can achieve this time limit (returning Feb 12 months), having attended the 4 seminars, done the research etc ... if I choose another project to focus on. Fr. Goetz here suggested that I could work on developing a parish program centered on

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pre-baptismal adult education designing and setting up the course and training the people needed to continue such. This would have me ready to impliment by perhaps Feb 86. My question is whether that would be best for my work at home? The skills **acquired** are of course applicable across the board. However it might be possible to do a self training program, modelled on the one here.. working on the liturgy thing .. in a parish at home if you felt I ought return. By January I will have attended the 2nd seminar and that will be a help. I could alternatively work part time in the liturgy office here and investigate that, acquiring experience etc. Basically what I am saying, is that I recognise the conditions under which you freed me have changed. The program here can be of good benefit to me (& hopefully to others), but given the circumstances and needs at home which I hope I am trying to be more sensitive to, I am happy to look at alternatives that allow me to return early (e.g. next Feb or whenever you wish). There is always later and other means for me to get further academic qualifications if that is important .. ie. I am more interested in the learning than the degree. I was also looking to doing some investigation into liturgical art, but that can also wait, or be partially done at home.

Your Lordship, I want to be able to respond in the best possible way to what the call of serving as a priest means, and, I would appreciate your advice and direction. I really feel relaxed and confident about my committment to the priesthood and also about my, what could be called ambivalent feelings about here that led to my return. I am grateful to God for His kind watchfulness, and so am comfortable with whatever you need or require re my return ... I want to respond to that whether I am comfortable or not I dont fear my trip/trek is wasted if you need me home by the next shifts or thereabouts, a I can achieve a lot, learning wise still by then. Learning from yourself, I hope to put the diocese's needs first, knowing God and time can take care of other considerations. You know its really good to feel this way, also to feel a bit homesick at times and to miss what is going on.... I am glad to have had the opportunity to get in touch with that ... perhaps I did'nt realise 5 years in W'Bool helped me realise I belong.

Well I will leave this as above and await to hear from you My Lord. In the meantime, please keep me in your prayers as I will you, and the diocese. I have been remembering Tom Russell in my masses - I was sad to learn of his death.

Until later, take care and the Lord be with you,

Yours in Christ the Priest

