

16th August, 1985.

Father Paul-David Ryan,
Church of the Holy Angels,
218 K Street,
DAYTON, OHIO. 45409
U.S.A.

Dear Paul-David,

Thank you for your letter of August 1st outlining your thoughts since your arrival in the U.S.A. I was wondering how things were going with you and am naturally pleased to receive such a positive message.

With reference to the situation here in the diocese, I have to say that the staffing position has become worse rather than better. Frank McKenzie had to resign from his parish due to ill health and the filling of that parish meant that there was one less person on the staff at the Cathedral. Most recently, Father Peter Murray - who was in the diocese on a two year trial basis - has decided that he does not wish to continue working here and he will be leaving after this coming week-end. That will mean that there will be two on the staff of the Cathedral parish! Max Slater is still unwell, though holding down his Parish for the present. John Kelly has retired, as you know, but he is presently in St. Vincents Hospital in Melbourne and it seems likely that he will be there for some months to come.

You can see then that the staffing position is not the greatest. One man will be ordained for the diocese next week, but will return to Saint Paul's Seminary in Sydney until the end of the year. By that time, there may well be talk of other retirements amongst the senior citizens who are still working as Parish Priests.

Objectively then, the staffing position is such that I would be pleased to see you come back to the diocese if other things are equal. I am very pleased to learn that your return to America has helped you to sort yourself out and particularly pleased at your statement that you have come to see that your place is in the diocese and that you are looking forward to getting home and being part of the diocese. In that regard, I must say that I was pleased that you finally found yourself able to attend the Clergy Retreat in January and I was disappointed that you were leaving so soon afterwards in the light of the fact that it seemed to me that the priests were very pleased to accept you once you gave some indication that you regarded yourself as part of the diocese. I would hope that, whenever you return, you will see the desirability of joining in with the activities of the Clergy, such as Retreats and In-Service weeks, so that you will be truly at home. We have had a great

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experience over these weeks of the introduction of a "Ministry to Priests Program" into the diocese. After preliminary activities, the first week of Spiritual Awareness Retreats was conducted last week and was acclaimed by all as a great success. The second week will begin on Sunday evening next. There is a great feeling of unity amongst our priests and a desire for mutual support.

With regard to the academic side of your stay in the United States, that is something which was rather secondary - though not unimportant - in my thinking. My motivation for releasing you at this time was rather in order to enable you to sort out your own position and to be free of any unnecessary strain. If therefore you feel that you can confidently say that you have worked out any personal problems with regard to your attitude to the priesthood or to the diocese, then I would say that I will welcome your return sooner rather than later. Perhaps the suggestion given that you return after having completed two seminars in February of next year would be the better arrangement. But I would not want you to take this step unless you were satisfied that it would not put you under more pressure and you felt able to return and to really try to become part of the priestly body of the diocese. As I have indicated, I am sure there is no problem on the part of the priests in that regard and that you will be welcomed warmly.

I hope that I have put my position fairly clearly and I will look forward to your further reflections as soon as you have the opportunity to write. Obviously it will be helpful to me to know what the staffing position will be next year as soon as possible. On the other hand, I repeat that I do not wish to place you under any undue pressure. The primary object of the exercise is to ensure that you are personally at peace with yourself and the future.

With every blessing and best wish,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Bishop of Ballarat.