

PHONE: (067) 65 9543
 P.O. BOX 2
 SOUTH TAMWORTH
 N.S.W. 2340

St. Edward's
South Tamworth

3rd December, 1987.

Most Rev. H. J. Kennedy, D.D.,
 Bishop of Armidale,
 Bishop's House,
 P.O. Box 93,
ARMIDALE. N.S.W. 2350.

Dear Bishop Kennedy,

I hope all goes well for you.

I am writing to express concern about our confrere John Farrell. I understand you have asked him to stay away from the diocese until February, when his court case is scheduled. There may be details of the situation that I am not aware of, but I can only speak from what I know, and there are aspects of the current way of handling the matter that trouble me, and others also.

No doubt John is being asked to stay away due to possible embarrassment to the church, or particular people in the church, and that is to some extent understandable; there is also the question of possible scandal of some kind. But people in Tamworth and Armidale have expressed to me a feeling of being scandalised by the lack of compassion being shown by church authorities; if the central message of the Gospel is related to "good news" of a merciful and forgiving Father, it seems there can hardly be worse scandal than the church community being seen to be seriously lacking in compassion and support for one of its own clergy.

I understand that John is known to have had problems with certain deviant behaviour, but has sought and received treatment with those problems. As far as I know, there has been no evidence of further problems since that treatment; certainly, there has been no reference to this matter since his coming to Tamworth quite some time ago, to my knowledge and that of other priests here. In fact, since getting to know him here in Tamworth over the last eighteen months or so, I believe I have seen in him considerable growth in maturity, and quite a few people have spoken of the help he has been to them, especially in his preaching. I believe he will continue to be very helpful to people on current indications, and will be even more understanding of others' difficulties through his present experiences of personal difficulty. On the other hand, if he experiences rejection and harshness from the church, this could set back his progress as a person, and the favourable development of his ministry.

I realise there are complications in legal issues that could arise, but I wonder if all avenues have been explored e.g. a medical "clearance" to indicate a problem has been recognised and treated. It seems

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incomprehensible to me that a priest is practically disbarred from ministry -and even from being physically present in a diocese, where he can get support from family, and friends in both clergy and laity - for one lapse in behaviour.

I realise you can only act on the information and advice you receive, but I am concerned that to date you may have heard only one side of the story as far as views of clergy & laity are concerned. I would therefore like to talk this matter over with you when I am next in Armidale, if possible.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely in Christ,



P.S. It may help if I mention the name of one family who have been supportive of John, and have expressed concern to me about the current situation. I refer to John & Therese Toschack, who live in St. Nicholas' parish, and whom I have known well from the time they were in Walcha parish. John is regional manager of the State Bank here, and Therese is the secretary at St. Edward's Infants' School.