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ARMIDALE NSW 2350

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Friday, 21 March, 1997

Mr Jamie Cartner
Seminary of the Good Shepherd
P O Box S149
HOMEBUSH SOUTH, NSW, 2140

Dear Jamie,

Have you noticed that since John Howard has been in office, Holy Week seems to come more quickly? It certainly crept up on me this year. With the postal service as slow as it is I thought I had better write today to ensure you receive this *Easter greeting* by Easter.

I hope you find the Easter Ceremonies at the seminary very worthwhile. Quite probably, never again will you see them done as well as they are done at the seminary. Certainly, when you are ordained and are responsible for organizing them and presiding over them you'll find Easter a most stressful time.

Sadly, during my time in the seminary, the ceremonies were beautiful but lacked depth. Our celebration of Christ's death was very much an intellectual experience, because few if indeed any of us, had experienced spiritual death and resurrection.

Some of us, myself included, certainly made up for it afterwards. The details are none of your business of course, but the benefits made the whole experience worthwhile.

It has made me happy to have been able to share the benefits with you whenever you have asked my advice or sought my guidance in your journey as a Christian man and *priestlet*.

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St Patrick's day was an opportunity for me to reflect on these things. Patrick, as you may know, was held in captivity as a slave for many years. Because he went on to do great things people tend to forget how he must have felt when he was in captivity. It must have been horrendous, worrying about his future etc. In due course he escaped. Talking about it later, Patrick said that during the ordeal he grew in his faith and developed a trust in God. It was his terrible ordeal that gave him what he needed so he could go on to do the great things for which he is remembered.

Each of us, in our own way, is called on to do that. Sad is the person who misses out on the experience. Yes, such ordeals are painful at the time, but the end result makes it all worthwhile. If you have not gone through it already, Jamie, then you'll really be no use to the Church until you do.

Ironically, the priests who make the best contribution to the people of God are not the goody-goods, but men who have been tested and who have come through it.

I regard myself as especially blessed because I enjoy the friendship of priests who have been through such experiences, and who in turn have shared the benefits with me.

Consider yourself blessed because I share mine with you.

Wishing you the blessings of our most merciful God, Jamie, as we celebrate the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Saviour.

Sincerely
John Farrell