

12th January, 1990

Father Gerald F Ridsdale
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USA

Dear Gerry,

It was great to receive your letter of December 29th. I am sorry that I have not been in contact before this. Things just seem to get away from me in the weeks immediately prior to Christmas. Since then I have been in some difficulty, as I have been confined to bed since a couple of days before the new year began. Nothing terminal! I have had trouble with my back and the remedy is rest. I am assured that this remedy - extended over some six weeks - should ensure that the problem will be corrected and need not recur. Rushing back into action can be counter-productive in the long run, as the same problem could come back. In the meantime, this letter comes to you through the miracle of the micro cassette which enables me to dictate it whilst lying in bed.

I am sorry that you had difficulties on your arrival and that you were not met at the airport as had been promised and that you had further problems in reaching your destination. It is good to know that, once you arrived, you found a good welcome. I am sure that it would have been somewhat difficult settling in in the beginning but hope that you are taking it in your stride by now. Father Peter Lechner did phone me to say that there had been an evaluation after your arrival. There is some question about the prudence of his sending this evaluation to me. As soon as I am able to do so, I will take some legal advice and then be in touch with him by telephone. I actually went down with my back problem two days after he telephoned to ask my advice and I promised that I would be back to him. I am asking Brian McDermott to phone him to explain the delay lest he think that I have simply forgotten his request or am not doing anything about it. I don't imagine that there should be any difficulty, but it is important for everybody concerned that we be as sure of our ground as we can.

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There will be a great deal of movement throughout the diocese next week. Fourteen parishes will have different Parish Priests. That means about a quarter of the diocese. There are also six assistant priests taking up new positions, so there will be cars moving all across western Victoria. I was fairly satisfied with the ultimate arrangements for our changes and pray that they will work out well. There is a completely new team at the Cathedral and Glynn Murphy will be coming to work with me as my Secretary and also will have responsibility for the Marriage Tribunal. So a lot of priests around the diocese will be getting to know each other better!

I was delighted to read that you had Christmas dinner with Joel Garner. I have to confess that I had been meaning to make contact with him and had not done so. For that reason I was particularly pleased that you had been introduced to him and spent some time at his Rectory. I could well understand that Christmas Day would have been a time when you would have felt your absence from your home territory. However, I hope that it was a blessed and peaceful time for you.

It is good that you have been able to see something of New Mexico. I found it a quite fascinating area. I hope that you are obeying the signs and "respecting the rattle snakes' right to privacy"!

I will be in touch again as soon as I can and, in the meantime will of course welcome any communication from yourself as to how things are going. Be assured of my prayers. I ask you for yours.

With every blessing and best wish for 1990 and beyond,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Bishop of Ballarat