

Rev. R. Pickering

19th February, 1988.

Personal and Strictly Confidential.

Reverend Ronald Pickering, P.P.,
Catholic Presbytery,
73 North Road,
GARDENVALE, Vic.

Dear Father Pickering,

Although your personal and strictly confidential letter of 12th February, 1988, is quite offensive and not in character with other correspondence which was more gracious, I will not enter into the judgements you make but rather pick up the core of your message.

Your letter provides me with a dilemma. I have a Claytons resignation. It appears to be a case of a resignation not being a resignation. I speak of your present appointment as parish priest. Should you wish to resign as parish priest I would ask you to present that request in writing.

Should the judgements you make in your letter be carefully considered and incapable of review and revision, then I could understand your request for release. In view of the statements in your letter, it could even be demanded in conscience. On the other hand you have had the opportunity freely to exercise your ministry; the particular quality of your service has evoked an appropriate response. Such people may not as easily receive similar service without you. I am confident that with them you would engender loyalty and fidelity to the Church, even the particular Church of Melbourne.

The grounds provided for your request for release appear thin. There are interpretations given to particular events which hardly warrant the resignation of a parish priest of a community which has little or no association with the particular events.

You are also quite young. I can only conclude that you would wish to find some willing bishop of a diocese where you could work more happily than in the terms of the expressions of your letter. In view of the strength of your statements, that I can understand. Please know that willingly I would want to help you; if you cannot live out your priesthood happily in Melbourne,

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then let it be somewhere where your not inconsiderable talents can be offered in priestly service. You ask for release; you state specifically that you are not resigning. In view of your professed position, I wish only to help you live joyfully the priesthood with which you have been gifted.

May I therefore give you the opportunity to reflect on the content of ~~that~~ letter. I shall await your reply.

I also wish to raise with you the initiative which you have supported in the formation of St. James' Church, Gardenvale Centenary Restoration Committee. While I can have nothing but admiration for an initiative which has that stated aim in view, I would wish any successor to be in such a position that he would find it difficult to accept the organisation or some aspects of it. You state that you are "about to sever": that sounds extremely imminent. I must also suppose that it means that you discontinue your position as parish priest. I would appreciate your not binding your successor to matters about which he should have right to judge - should resignation be what you have in mind.

I have sought to respond to your letter as a life-long (if I discount the first 27 years of my life) friend and as a person for whose considerable talents I have great admiration.

With cordial greetings and best wishes, I remain,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

E.

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE