

Very Reverend Archbishop T.F. Little
 Archbishop House
 Cathedral Place
 PO Box 146
 EAST MELBOURNE. VIC. 3002.

Mr REDACTED
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 SUNBURY VIC. 3429

Your Grace,

I have, after much prayer and personal conflict, made this decision to write to you explaining my concern at the intolerable situation that prevails in our Parish, at Sunbury, with respect to the spiritual conflict that exists and doubt as to the integrity of the Church's intentions.

I was raised a Catholic and have, all my adult life, been actively involved in the support of and concern for the well being of the Church.

We (myself and family) first arrived in Sunbury in 1975 and left in 1977 for a stay in New Guinea, returning to Sunbury in 1979. During this period the parish priest Fr Feenhan was replaced by Fr. P. Searson. On our return we were appalled by the dramatic change which had occurred in the parish. Friends we had known, who had previously been "pillars" of our community, were not only no longer involved in the parish, but attended Mass at other areas, and in a few extreme cases attended Mass sporadically or not at all. We accepted this situation in the spirit that maybe Fr Searson, who was being blamed, was in fact being used as an excuse and perhaps the people involved lacked spiritual strength and guidance.

We therefore approached our Parish activities and responsibilities with an open mind and tried very hard to ignore the personal judgements being 'aired' around us. Much to our concern we were coming to the same conclusions, and an emotion of distrust and questioning of the integrity of Fr. Searson, and repulsion towards the Parish community, eventually existed within us. This emotion became so strong that it affected our lives at home and our marriage was threatened; thank God we have overcome this.

A number of marriages have dissolved in our community and although the blame for this cannot and must not be placed wholly on the atmosphere existing in the Parish, I do feel that this atmosphere did not and still does not support those of us who are needing spiritual comfort and support in our marital and family life.

From personal experience I know that the principals and staff of our schools are working under extreme provocation from autocratic decisions and lack of sincere communication from Fr. Searson and we as parents have no trust in his decisions or his person.

I have, much to my spiritual discomfort, instructed my children to refuse to be called to Fr. Searson's office unless accompanied by another child or adult.

Our Parish publishes a newsletter called 'Pastoral Contact'. The issue for Holy Week contained an article which appears to be written for members of CARE an organisation whose philosophy Your Grace expressly disagreed with in a written condemnation in the Advocate Newspaper. A copy of the Pastoral Contact article is enclosed.

-2-

Your Grace must be aware of the serious problems existing in the Parish of Sunbury and I am conscious of the great responsibilities your office has to bear and the sincere deliberations that must precede decision of grave concern.

I think I am a person who requires constant provocation resulting in sincere concern and deliberation before I would react in the manner I have in this letter.

It is only due to the faith of your people and in spite of Fr. Searson that our community has survived.

Can we accept and trust the theology presented to us by Fr. Searson? By my children reactions and our recent marital uneasiness I am of the sincere opinion that Fr. Searson must be removed from Parish duties. I was willing to accept, albeit with reservations, distrust in some areas, but with regards to my family and faith I will not and my conscience dictates to me that I would be quite correct in severing my relationship with the parish and school.

My faith in the integrity of the Church is being sorely tried when it appears this intolerable situation is allowed to remain, with apparent unconcern.

I pray that God will, through Your Grace, come to our assistance, and comfort Fr. Searson whatever the outcome.

Yours in Faith,

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