

25th May, 1978.

Rev. Fr. Paul Ryan,
C/- Star of the Sea Church,
1404 Pacific Avenue,
Virginia Beach,
VIRGINIA 23451,
U.S.A.

Dear Paul,

Thanks for your letter of May 17th. I am replying more promptly than usual, so hopefully the lines won't be crossed this time. I hope that the last communication -- which was the cheque -- has arrived by now. Unfortunately there was some delay caused by an over-scrupulous teller at our Bank, but the matter was finally resolved.

I was in Sydney last week for the Australian Bishops' Conference and took the opportunity to talk to Archbishop Little about an itinerary for our 'ad limina' visit. As usual, the time element places limits on where we might go and so we agreed to go our separate ways through South America and to meet up in Washington and continue on together from there. A fairly tentative plan is for us both to be in Washington by September 25 and to head for New York on September 29th. This does not give a lot of time in Washington and it may be possible for me to get in a day or two earlier, but at least the date given should be fairly definite. I can speak for him on the matter of accommodation and can say that we will both be very happy to have you arrange for us to stay at Holy Trinity. We would also like to pay a visit to the Bishops' Conference Secretariate at some stage during our stay.

My earlier letter to Father Harvey suggesting that you arrange to supply through the summer and not longer was prompted by his suggestion that Doctor Kinnane was not in favour of your staying in the U.S. No doubt we will sort something out when I see you, but I can appreciate your concern (and Dr. Kinnane's) about the future. In your April 19th letter you said that the Doctor wasn't sure that I wanted you back at all, though you hadn't felt those vibes from me. I don't know how far we can get until we talk, but it might be good for me to put the picture as I see it at this stage.

2.

It would be my first preference that you would be able to return to work as a priest in this Diocese. That was my hope from the beginning and the only question on which I wanted reassurance was that you would indeed be able to function as a priest without any problems in the future. However, a second question has arisen since you left and that is whether you would be able to function in this Diocese. Certainly I would not suggest to any other Bishop that he place you unless I would conscientiously feel able to place you myself, other things being equal. The question on which I am not so sure now is whether other things are in fact equal. The reason for wondering about that is that there has been some talk about incidents which occurred here in Ballarat when you were here -- which talk has only come to my notice later. How widespread any knowledge of problems here is I do not really know, but it could be that such knowledge could put you under some pressure which would make it difficult for you to operate with the necessary freedom. I will have to try to gauge this factor before speaking to you, but it is a question which will have to be on the 'agenda' of our discussion.

Should you be placed in the Diocese, then the first placement would have to be in a normal parish situation, rather than in any ('specialist' position. The other priests would certainly expect this and would tend to react against anyone being in a specialist position without having experience of the ordinary parish involvement. Obviously there would be opportunities to use the work you have done in the States through the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

Whatever about the future, I hope you don't have any fears of being 'dumped' as you put it. We will simply have to try to work out what is best in all the circumstances. I can't see much point in a European stint at this stage and would think that, if it does seem desirable -- as you yourself seem to suggest -- that you stay away longer, then America would be the place to stay. On the other hand, Fr. Harvey has some reservations about that.

I hope the above makes some sense and doesn't worry you. Please keep in touch. We might both pray about it all in the time before we have to make any decisions. I will write to Fr. Harvey, but you might like to show him this letter, so that we will all know where we are at.

With every blessing,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Bishop of Ballarat.