

PLEASE QUOTE: G.42

MEMORANDUM ON A TELEPHONE CALL FROM THE REV. R. D. PICKERING ON THURSDAY, 20th JANUARY, 1994, at 5.10 p.m.

An individual identifying himself as Father Ron Pickering rang me in response to my letter to him of 10th January. He told me that his address was in fact REDACTED and that the letter I had sent care of his sister had taken a little time to reach him.

Father Pickering said that he would not respond to my invitation to come and see me since he felt he didn't want to trouble me although he offered his gratitude for the help which he said the letter gave him.

The individual on the telephone spoke for nearly a quarter-of-an-hour. In the course of the conversation it emerged that Father Pickering was born in the East End of London and educated in this country including a spell at Oxford. He eventually went to Australia where he was ordained and served as a priest. He was most respectful, even unctious, on the telephone towards me describing me as "his dear bishop". Father Pickering said that on arrival in Cliftonville he had been approached by Father Michael Boland with a request that he might on occasions assist in the parish. However, having received further instructions from his Archbishop he assured me over the telephone that he would not be available for supply work and would not seek it. He said he had permission from his Archbishop to say Mass privately and I indicated that I would allow him to do that in his home provided there was no advertisement or people invited to the Mass, and he assured me that this would be the case.

He said it had come as a great shock to him to receive the letter from his Archbishop restricting him in terms of any priestly ministry. He was insistent that accusations against him in Australia were made only after he had left and they were not well-founded. He himself had learnt from a priest friend in Cambridgeshire about the situation of Father Patrick Ryan at the Diocese of Ballarat.

Father Patrick Ryan had in fact stayed with him for 2½ months but was no longer with him. Father Pickering felt it would not be appropriate for him to let me know where he was at the present moment. He had learned about Father Ryan's condition with regard to his own bishop from this priest friend of his in Cambridgeshire.

Father Pickering indicated to me that he felt he would like to move from Cliftonville because he found the place a cultural desert. His age is 67, he told me, and his background meant that he wanted to move into a place where there were greater cultural opportunities.

I indicated to him on the telephone that I was certainly available to help him should he ever wish to come and see me. I accepted his assurances that he was not available for supply work and indicated to him that he should keep to these assurances.

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Bishop John Jukes OFM Conv  
Bishop of Strathearn

20th January, 1994