



LA VERNA RETREAT HOUSE

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December 17, 1991.

Most Reverend T. Francis Little.
St. Patrick's Cathedral,
P.O. Box 146,
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Frank,

I have had two assessment sessions on November 29th and today December 17th with Father Bill Baker. I would like to pass on to you my comments and recommendations. I have discussed these with Bill and am sending him a copy of this letter.

Bill exhibits all the signs of moderately serious burn-out. He is exhausted, finds decision-making stressful, finds ordinary tasks burdensome, has low self-confidence, and feels that he would just like to run away from life as it is right now. In addition to these pressures he has had a moderate amount of surgery and physical discomfort, and this has added to the stress level. All these signs add up to a serious enough issue that requires some intervention soon.

As a first option we discussed the possibility of his changing his life-style while continuing to be pastor at Eltham. We agreed that this choice would not be viable for several reasons: firstly, the expectations on him are already in place and to change them would be quite challenging; secondly, Eltham is a parish with considerable pressures anyhow; thirdly, and more importantly, he feels that thirteen years in one place is enough and he wants to move on.

I feel that the first necessity for him is a period of time for rest, recreation and self-care. He needs a total break from the work of ministry for some time. We discussed how long this break might be and our combined suggestion is for around three months. I would like to add that there is no question of Bill's being dissatisfied as a priest or wishing to leave the ministry. He is merely burnt out at this time of his priestly life.

As for future placement, Bill doesn't have the energy to think too clearly about such options yet. Whether he might be pastor in a smaller parish or assistant is unclear as of now.

My recommendations then are:

1. That he be relieved of his pastorship at Eltham soon. Bill feels that the end of January or beginning of February would be fine.
2. That he have three months for personal recuperation. He is going to reflect on where and when this might occur.
3. That during these three months, and depending on Bill's health and available ministerial positions, he negotiate with the appropriate authorities about his future ministry.

I hope these comments are of assistance, and I wish you a restful and peaceful Christmas.

Yours Faithfully,

Peter Cantwell ofm.

Fr. Peter Cantwell ofm.

19/2/91