

REDACTED

3rd March, 1985

The Bishop for  
the Diocese of Lismore,  
LISMORE . NSW 2480

My Lord,

It is with great regret that I write to you concerning the Parish of Tweed Heads. Some two years ago you replaced our Parish Priest, Father A. Hoade with Father R. Brown. In that time, Fr. Brown has lost his good name among a number of the parishioners and I feel, has caused the good name of the Parish to be similarly affected.

My concern over Fr. Brown's conduct first arose when I was asked to serve on the Planned Giving Committee in 1984. Over the weeks, Fr. Brown attended most meetings obviously affected by alcohol. The cost to the Parish of the Parish Dinner held as part of the program was a great bone of contention amongst the community at the time. Although the cost of the dinner was ultimately borne by individual members of the Parish, this was not effectively communicated to the people and several times I was approached by people who expressed their concern to me over the use of Parish funds for such a purpose. Whilst an enjoyable social event, many felt it a great waste of money.

People have also expressed their concern to me at the cost of the welfare program instituted by Fr. Brown - not only in monetary terms. Many have spoken to me of the "louts, desperadoes and drug addicts" who seemingly occupy Futcher House at will. The house has a very dubious reputation amongst parishioners and the local constabulary, some of whom have said to me that the house is merely a haven for criminals. Since the institution of the welfare program and Futcher House, the Church has been the object of acts of desecration including urination upon the Altar as well as defacing it with words. Whilst I have no first hand knowledge of these acts of desecration, people who have attended the masses when these things have been discovered have spoken to me about it. The occupants of Futcher House are invariably blamed by Parishioners; right or wrong. Several Parishioners have also spoken to me about some of these people living in the Presbytery. Whilst accepting that Fr. Brown may have in the Presbytery whom he wishes, many feel as I do, that the state of the Parish Priest's house should be a symbol for the Parish. In short, Fr. Brown appears impervious to all requests by Parishioners to instil some sort of discipline over the people who make use of Futcher House.

From my talks with people, it seems to me the Parish is losing faith in its Priest.

I have perused the Code of Canon Law and in particular, Canons 1740 to 1742. If My Lord cannot secure the voluntary removal of Fr. Brown

REDACTED

.. /2

REDACTED

from the Parish then myself and several other parishioners are willing to provide the statutory declarations which would support the removal of a Parish Priest in accordance with Canon 1741, 3°.

Should it be that Fr. Brown leaves or is removed from the Parish then I would ask that, for the sake of continuity and unity, you leave Fr. Nugent in place. Should a senior priest be unavailable to assume the position of Parish Priest, then I suggest that a Parish Council be appointed to administer the Parish led by Fr. Nugent. I have spent a lot of time considering who could comprise such a Council and can provide those names if you wish.

My wife and I have noticed over the past few months, the growing disillusionment and disaffection of Fr. Nugent in his position as Curate to Fr. Brown. It is of great concern to us that the young man who arrived in our Parish full of the joy of his priesthood should now be so disillusioned and defeated. Rightly or wrongly, we believe this change to have been wrought by having to live and work with a man we believe to have alcohol related problems.

Fr. Brown's drinking habits are a common subject of discussion amongst the Catholic community. We are worried Parishioners and we are not alone in our worry.

I would be happy to speak with you personally concerning any of the matters raised in this letter and I can be contacted during office hours at **REDACTED**.

Yours faithfully,

**REDACTED**