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February 14, 1992

Most Reverend Ronald Mulkearns, D.D.
Bishop of Ballarat: P.O. Box 121
South Ballarat, VIC. 3350
Australia

Dear Bishop Mulkearns

It was good to hear from you and to hear that Father Gerry is settling in well in his new position with the St. John of God Community in New South Wales. After some thought and consultation regarding Father Paul David Ryan I would like to say the following:

Briefly, as I understand your letter, there have been the following suspicions in his regard: 1) homosexual acting out in '75-'76, before Ordination, 2) molestation of a 14-year-old boy in about 1981, which has been denied by Father Paul and is complicated by the fact of his having heard the youth's confession, and 3) imprudent conduct with a school boy in February of 1991. Father Paul has received outpatient therapy and spiritual direction while in Washington, D.C. from February 1977 to May 1978. In the latter part of 1991 he received advice from Father James Gill and did a retreat in Rome.

I can understand and appreciate your concern for Father Paul's welfare and your desire to help him. He is in quite a difficult position and I would like to do whatever possible to help him. I am certainly willing to talk with Father Paul and would suggest an assessment by the staff here. In all honesty, however, I should say that I am sure that, because of Father Paul's past history, no ordinary in the United States would be open to receiving him for ministry as he presently is.

If he were to go through a residential treatment program and appeared to really have his problem under control, an ordinary *might* consider him for an assignment, but, unfortunately, there is no guarantee that this would happen. It is possible that he might be considered unsuitable for ministry. It is also possible that a time of some years out of ministry, after residential treatment, might be recommended as a period of growth, discernment and verification before a bishop would consider taking him. To add to the difficult nature of Father Paul's situation, the funding of a residential program would undoubtedly be a serious question.

I wish I had a more encouraging answer/suggestions to give you and Father Paul. His



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situation is not unique. My own experience has been that in such situations there often seems to be no good answer and one tries to do the best possible. Along with you and he, I and my confreres will pray that the Lord may provide a way forward for him.

Respectfully yours,

Peter Lechner, s.P.
(rev.) Peter Lechner, s.P.
Director: Villa Louis Martin