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February 10, 1994

TO: Bishop R.A.Mulkearns
FROM: Special Issues Committee, Diocese of Ballarat
RE: Father P.D. Ryan

Following a lengthy interview between Father Paul David Ryan and members of the Special Issues Committee, in the presence of the Vicar General, on Thursday February 3, 1994, a full meeting of the Special Issues Committee took place on the evening of that day.

The following recommendations to Bishop Mulkearns are a result of deliberations at that full meeting of the Special Issues Committee.

1. The Laicization process should be commenced now, with Father Ryan signing an official application for laicization before he again leaves the Ballarat Diocese.

It is clear to the Special Issues Committee that Father Ryan does not have a future in priestly ministry in this Diocese and that Bishop Mulkearns would be taking an unacceptable risk in allowing Father Ryan to take up any form of priestly ministry in any other part of the universal Church.

Problems have persisted with Father Ryan from the time of Ordination to the present. Unfortunately there does not appear to be any significant growth or improvement in Father Ryan's attitude during that time. (Note: an extremely self-centred view of life emerging throughout the interview). Many of Father Ryan's answers, especially relating to his attitude towards his Bishop, are simply unsatisfactory in the extreme.

2. If Father Ryan refuses to sign an application for laicization, the Special Issues Committee advises that an indefinite state of full suspension of all faculties (while noting Canon 976) be maintained and communicated in writing by Bishop Mulkearns, however every effort needs to be made to convince Father Ryan of the overall wisdom of laicization.
3. If Father Ryan leaves the Diocese without applying for laicization, especially if he travels overseas, the relevant Bishops' Conference should be confidentially informed of Father Ryan's status. Such information should be held in confidence at nothing lower than the level of Diocesan Bishop within that Conference.
4. It should be made clear to Father Ryan, in writing, that he does not have any future, anywhere, in priestly ministry. The Special Issues Committee believes that anything less than such a statement is simply misleading and is allowing a false hope to persist in the mind of Father Ryan.
5. If Father Ryan cooperates reasonably with his Bishop and Diocesan Church, the Special Issues Committee advises that clear and limited (not open-ended) avenues

CONFIDENTIAL

of material and therapeutic assistance can then be decided upon and communicated in writing to Father Ryan.

These avenues would include:

- A set time limit for paying the cost of therapy (eg. one year).
- A monetary ceiling, not to be exceeded during that time limit, for the payment of suitable therapy.
- Bills for therapy are to be sent directly to the Diocese from the Registered Practitioner and payment is to be made by the Diocese directly to the Registered Practitioner.
- If absolutely necessary, an amount to be decided by the Bishop and made available on a once-off basis in the form of a loan to Father Ryan, to help him establish accommodation, etc. This amount should not be excessive. The Special Issues Committee is taking into consideration amounts of financial assistance already made available to Father Ryan. (excluding therapy costs).
- No regular stipend payments. Father Ryan needs to establish himself in a secular lifestyle as soon as possible. He has indicated his intention to do that and to become self-supportive. The Special Issues Committee believes this course of action must be adhered to in a permanent manner.

6. In all the above matters the Special Issues Committee advises that it must be the Bishop and Diocese making final decisions and setting the limits of agreement. Father Ryan cannot dictate his own terms.

The Special Issues Committee strongly believes that Father Ryan needs to detach his identity of himself as a Catholic from his identity as Priest. He needs to see that the Church does not "abandon" him simply because he begins a secular lifestyle. This appears to be one of his biggest hurdles.

The above advice is given on behalf of the Special Issues Committee, Diocese of Ballarat.



Rev. Fr. Glynn Murphy,
Convenor, Special Issues Committee,
Diocese of Ballarat.