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Armando Ruiz
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6 October 2004

Dear Armando

Thank you very much for coming to see me, together with Reyes, yesterday, 5 October. Thank you also for your letter of the 1 October. I think your letter and our conversations have helped to clarify many matters. In the light of the first year of the presence of Mary's Ministries in Sacred Heart Parish, Aston, I now believe the work that you undertake and your presence in the diocese is finding a much firmer footing and clearer direction.

Our conversation yesterday covered two main areas: the first concerning the work of Mary's Ministries, and the second to do with accommodation and practical matters.

I believe the conclusions we came to yesterday regarding the work of Mary's Ministries were as follows. In the first place those placed in the presbytery of the Sacred Heart will have, over the next year, two main areas of objective. The first concerns the parish of the Sacred Heart. Here I hope that Mary's Ministries will work closely with the new parish priest, Fr Peter Jones, and enhance and expand both the use made of the church itself and the outreach the parish offers, especially to the non English and those who have recently arrived from distant countries. I hope Mary's Ministries will be able to use the parish church, invite others to join in particular acts of devotion and generally let the church be seen to be a place of warmth and welcome. With regard to the outreach within the parish, I am sure that there will be some instinctive understanding between Mary's Ministries and others who have recently arrived in this country. We talked about the large numbers of immigrant Catholics in the area who need to be contacted and, hopefully, brought into the community of the parish. The school, too, may be a useful starting point. In these parish based activities Mary's Ministries have also offered to assist Fr Gerry McArdle in his neighbouring parish, but I would hope that a clear realism is maintained in this work so that limited resources are not stretched too far.

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The second aspect of the work of Mary's Ministries in the coming year would be to look at its educational and training work. In this regard I hope a strong link can be developed with Maryvale Institute. This would be in regard of 'The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd' which, hopefully, can be looked at closely by the staff at Maryvale Institute and perhaps incorporated into some of the courses offered by the Institute. It may also be beneficial to ask the Institute, perhaps Fr David Oakley, to look at some of the other training units offered by Mary's Ministries to see how well adapted they are to current practice in the diocese. I hope that some of this educational work may also find root in the local parishes. To this effect, I am also writing to Fr Paul Watson, the Director of Maryvale Institute, asking for his help.

We also talked about the accommodation and other practical matters of the presence of Mary's Ministries in Sacred Heart Parish.

It is now clear that repair and restorative work needs to be done on the presbytery. It was helpful to note that the members of Mary's Ministries will be absent from the presbytery from November 23rd to some point in January. I also understand that Clare will be able to vacate the premises at this time, too. This is a window of opportunity for repair to be done, although we agreed that it would probably not be long enough.

In our conversation we also talked about your need to look for accommodation nearby which can be rented. Canon Browne undertook to help in this regard. The suggestion was made that rented accommodation might provide the extra flexibility for the Sacred Heart team of Mary's Ministries to use in order to give time for the work on the presbytery to be completed. I look forward to developments in this regard.

It was also noted that the agreement between Mary's Ministries and the diocese over the use of the presbytery ended on the 1st August. I asked if you would check whether all the accounts of this agreement have been properly completed. It seems to me sensible to allow this agreement simply to continue with our verbal consent until the work on the presbytery has been completed and a new agreement could be formulated in the new circumstances.

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It was in this context that we talked about your desire that we use the proposed rented house as a base for the training of other members of Mary's Ministries, over a shortish period in an English context. I believe this is something that could be developed in due course.

We also talked about the need for a clear daily programme for the Mary's Ministries communities and you kindly undertook to let me have a copy of the proposed daily programme when it has been agreed.

I was much encouraged by our conversation. I explained to you some of Fr Peter Jones' hopes not only for the parish itself but also for his use of its premises to promote his work in liturgical music in the diocese. I was glad of your assurance that this was not something that caused you any concern.

Thank you for the openness of our conversation and of assuring me, in such unequivocal terms, that your presence here is purely for the benefit of the diocese and very responsive to its wishes. It was in this context that we talked about the possible future role of a chaplain to Mary's Ministries.

Please be sure of my good wishes and prayers. I trust that this letter, a copy of which is being sent to Fr Peter Jones, can be used as a basis for ongoing discussions with him.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely



✠ Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Birmingham

cc

Reyes Maria Ruiz

The Rev Peter Jones

Canon P. Browne