



DIOCESAN CURIA

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20 August 2003

Most Rev George Biguzzi
Bishop of Makeni
PO Box 1
MAKENI
SIERRA LEONE

Dear Bishop Biguzzi

Thank you for your recent emails enquiring about the possibility of Fr John Nestor serving in your Diocese of Makeni, Sierra Leone.

Fr John Nestor is indeed a priest of the Diocese of Wollongong. In 1996 Fr Nestor was arrested on child sexual abuse charges. Initially, Fr Nestor was found guilty of the charges but, on appeal, this decision was reversed and he was found innocent. There are no civil or criminal matters pending.

However, the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has had its own procedures to follow in such circumstances, known as *Towards Healing*. Having followed the procedures set out in *Towards Healing*, my predecessor, Most Rev Philip Wilson, issued a decree on 7 August 1998 in which Fr Nestor was restricted from celebrating the liturgy publicly until such time as he was assessed as to his fitness to engage in any future public ministry (copy enclosed).

Fr Nestor sought recourse to the Congregation for the Clergy over this decision and in a decree issued on 21 December 2000 the Congregation found in favour of Fr Nestor and instructed the Diocese to restore him to active duty (copy enclosed).

In the meantime, I had been appointed Bishop of Wollongong.

Given the seriousness in the local situation, I decided to appeal the decision of the Congregation for the Clergy and the Diocese took its case to the Apostolic Signatura.

Presently, this case is still being heard, though the Apostolic Signatura has suspended the part of the decree of the Congregation for the Clergy pending the outcome of the appeal (copy enclosed). It is our understanding that because of the Apostolic Signatura's actions, Bishop Wilson's original decree still stands until the Tribunal makes its judgement.

Most Rev G Biguzzi

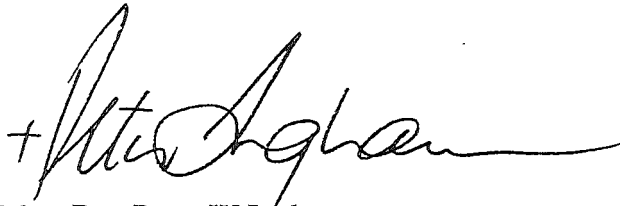
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The appeal has now been before the Tribunal since August 2001. Obviously, the length of time being taken to resolve the case one way or another is somewhat frustrating, both for the Diocese and I'm sure for Fr Nestor himself. Recently, I wrote to Cardinal Pompedda seeking clarification as to the status of our case. As yet, I have not received a reply.

I am aware that Fr Nestor has approached a number of Dioceses in the USA and other countries. Whenever I have been contacted by them, my response has been to simply point out the present situation and to indicate that I support the original decree from my predecessor. Until such time as the Apostolic Signatura makes its judgement, I am unable to provide any further recommendation.

I would be grateful if you would inform me of your own decision concerning Fr Nestor's request.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Ingham", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first letter.

Most Rev Peter W Ingham DD
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

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