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PW/lt/8155

10 March 1998

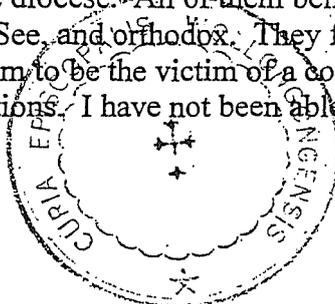
His Eminence Dario Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos  
Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy  
Piazza Pio XII ROMA 00193  
VATICAN CITY STATE

Your Eminence

Congratulations on your recent elevation to the College of Cardinals.

I write to seek your guidance in a serious clergy problem in this diocese. It concerns a priest of the diocese (ordained in 1989) about whom the following facts are known.

- 1 He was tried last year on a charge of the sexual assault of a minor and acquitted.
- 2 On the occasion in which the assault was alleged he slept for the night on a mattress placed on the floor close to two young boys.
- 3 Many people submit that his behaviour, language and conversations are unbecoming for a priest.
- 4 A number of new allegations including the allegation of a criminal act of child sexual assault have been made to me.
- 5 The families involved have refused to be involved in a police investigation or canonical procedure because of their fear of what they will suffer from him and his supporters. They have told me of the allegations but refuse to be interviewed by the delegated investigators.
- 6 This priest is strongly supported by a substantial group of the faithful (perhaps around 200) and four priests of the diocese. All of them believe he is an excellent priest, loyal to the Holy See, and orthodox. They further believe that it is these qualities that have led him to be the victim of a conspiracy to discredit him through these allegations. I have not been able to find any evidence of such a conspiracy.



*Michael J. Hillier*

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- 7 After his acquittal in November last year I requested him to refrain from public ministry until I could evaluate him and the situation in the diocese. He agreed grudgingly for some time and then informed me that he was going to ignore my instructions. I then informed him by mail that new allegations had been made and were being investigated, renewing my plea that he stand aside. Several weeks later he began to celebrate Sunday Mass in public. I again asked him to stop and warned him to stop or I would suspend him. He told me in writing to carry out my threats. I then wrote another letter begging him to stop and he did.
- 8 He and his supporters believe I have treated him unjustly and unfairly.
- 9 I have reached moral certitude that there is something deeply wrong in this priest's life.

I believe that the current investigation (being carried out according to c.1717 of the 1983 Code and the guidelines of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference) may leave me in a position where I will be unable to enact a penal process invoking c.1395 §2. This may happen because no-one will give sworn testimony about incidents which they have already discussed with me, in confidence.

Therefore, I write to seek your advice about my response to this situation. Is it possible to deal with this by using the provisions of c.277 §3? If in conscience I believe that this priest cannot be entrusted with ministry, how can I protect the faithful, uphold the dignity of the priesthood, and be just to him?

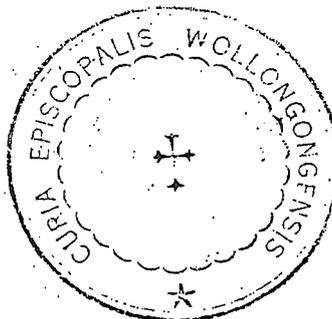
Your Eminence, I would be grateful for your help and guidance in this grave matter. That need is urgent so I would appreciate an early reply.

With thanks and best wishes

Yours sincerely

*+ Philip Wilson.*

Most Rev P Wilson DD JCL  
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG



*Michael Williams*