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O'KEEFFE

PO Box 14
Unanderra 2526

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Most Rev Philip Wilson DD JCL
Catholic Church Offices
PO Box 1239
Wollongong SCMC NSW 2521

My Lord,

The recent decision in the Court of Criminal Appeal in favour of Fr John Nestor was indeed, very good news. In the past few years, when the Catholic Church has been repeatedly humiliated by so many scandals involving priests, the decision in John's favour should be a great relief to all Catholics in the Diocese of Wollongong. I write today in the hope that I can be of some influence in the process of assessment referred to in your recent press release, which must, I believe, have as its principal aim, the restoration of John's good name and character, including the restoration of his priestly faculties and freedom to minister in the active life of the Church.

I offer these observations respectfully, but I also offer them with the earnest desire that John's vindication and the restoration of his character and priestly faculties be as complete as possible. The demands of justice must include a certain sensitivity to all concerned in this case. However, I believe that John has already become a victim. He has been a victim through being falsely accused of misconduct; through being deprived of any worthwhile ministry for the past eighteen months, and a victim also through the humiliation that he has had to endure in this same period of time. The criminal proceedings are now complete. I urge you to complete any church assessment as quickly as possible, so as to fully correct this most painful experience.

While I would understand your hesitation to restore John to a parish appointment, at least for the present, I must admit to being greatly surprised that you have not, as yet, restored John's faculties to celebrate or concelebrate public Masses. While I can understand a need for a period of assessment in terms of John's parish ministry, I must admit to bewilderment that he has to continue in this unfortunate state of ministerial limbo. After the painfully slow process of demonstrating his innocence, John now awaits the justice of being welcomed back by the clergy and people of the diocese. It would seem to me that the first step in this process would be to grant John the justice that has been denied to him these past eighteen months, that of the faculty of public Masses. I would urge you, my Lord, to grant this faculty without any further delay.

In the time that John was resident with me at the presbytery of the Parish of Ruse, his character was all that could be expected of a priest. I would not agree with all of John's opinions and ideas, but his record in the diocese is of a particularly dedicated and conscientious priest, dedicated to personal prayer and to the often difficult task of evangelisation.

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In the face of such false accusations, I believe that the Church must uphold the truth and not obscure the demands of justice. John has successfully defended his good name. Now the Church must do the same.

I would have thought that the decision in John's favour would have been a cause for rejoicing. Instead, I feel our hesitation may even prolong the injustice.

With all due respect, I wonder, my Lord, if you are being poorly advised.

A rare opportunity is presented to the diocese to demonstrate that a false accusation must be completely rejected. Lest John remain a victim, his good character and priestly faculties need to be upheld. I urge you to complete the process of justice.

If you desire to discuss this with me, I will return from New Zealand by the end of this month.

Yours sincerely in Our Lord,



Rev Mark O'Keefe