

*Bishop Geoffrey Robinson*

*St Joseph's Presbytery  
126 Liverpool Road  
ENFIELD NSW 2136  
Telephone: (02) 9747 6446  
Facsimile: (02) 9747 4733  
Secretary: (02) 9287 1574*

22 October 1999

Bishop P Wilson  
Catholic Church Offices  
PO Box 1239  
WOLLONGONG SCMC NSW 2521

Dear Bishop Wilson,

I have received a copy of a letter of 8 October from Father John Nestor to yourself and have been asked to comment.

Father Nestor appears to be saying that he welcomes dialogue and, provided you agree to everything he wants, "an agreement can be speedily achieved." It is obvious that he believes that, thanks to the letters from the Congregation for the Clergy, he is in a position of power in relation to any dialogue with you, so his "suggestions" for the dialogue are in fact demands.

You will have noted the obvious fact that he demands the first action of you before you even meet. This is, of course, a power ploy, enabling him to refuse to attend the meeting or accuse you of coming to the meeting in bad faith because you have not carried out the first demand.

In previous correspondence we have noted that you appear to be in a bind between the demands of civil law and church law. And yet this is ultimately a matter of conscience rather than of law. The ultimate question is what you believe in conscience before God alone you can do, can't do and must do. Before answering this ultimate question, you might be wise, for your own later protection, to marshal all your facts in writing and to discuss the matter with one or more persons seen as knowledgeable and objective.

If your decision at the end of this process is that you cannot agree to any or all of his demands, I suggest that you seek the support of the Australian bishops. They cannot be asked to agree with your decision, for they will not be in a position to investigate all the facts. They can be asked to agree with your right to make a decision in conscience. They can add that a number of them have faced dilemmas similar to yours and that all realise that your dilemma could be theirs tomorrow. The bishops meet from 22 to 26 November and you might like to time your meeting with Fr. Nestor to enable you to seek this support from the bishops. If you do decide to take the matter to the bishops, I promise any support I can give.

Yours sincerely,

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

Diocese of Wollongong		
28 OCT 1999		
Bishop	Chancellor	DFA
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File	Reply	