

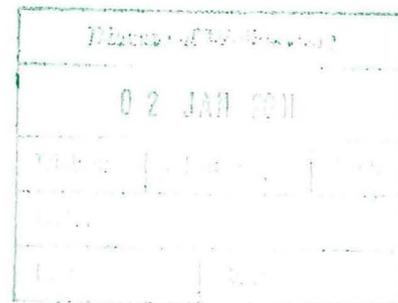
Bishop Geoffrey Robinson



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

24 December 2000

Bishop P Wilson
PO Box 1239
WOLLONGONG SCMC NSW 2521



Dear Bishop Wilson,

I am going away on holiday immediately after Christmas and will be back about 15th January. I realise that you also wish to leave as clear a situation as you can for the administrator who will take over from you.

I think you can look at the situation under the headings of canon law, civil law and conscience.

Under the heading of canon law you can appeal to some other congregation, but this would merely delay matters and I don't see that you would gain anything substantive. I think it has to be admitted that the process followed does not fulfil all the requirements of canon law and that you don't have the proofs to follow those processes now. One can argue with a few of the things the decree says (e.g. the repeated insistence on alleged expenses of \$75,000, which, even if true, is canonically irrelevant and yet seems to have carried weight), but I don't see any long-term future in canonical procedures if they are applied in the way this decree does.

Under the heading of civil law, I remember that we talked of getting an opinion from a barrister on where you stood in relation to the civil law concerning "unacceptable risk" in this case. I do not know whether you ever sought this opinion. If not, it could be a good idea to do so now. Such a document could be useful to you in any further action of any kind that is taken.

Under the heading of conscience, I remember that we talked of setting out the case on paper concerning where you stood in the forum of conscience and seeking the opinion of prudent people on the subject. I do not know whether this has been done, but again there could be a point in doing it now.

Under both of the last two headings, the major requirement is to set out on paper as clearly and fully as possible the entire case explaining why the person in charge of the diocese of Wollongong cannot give this priest an appointment.

After this, one option might be an appeal to the Sacred Penitentiary in the forum of conscience, but I really don't know how this body works or what criteria it would follow. Needless to say, I also fear that the people in Rome simply don't understand this issue.

We have also spoken of seeking the support of the Australian Bishops. They could not really pass judgement on the case, but, having looked at the details of the case, they could support a bishop's right to make a decision in conscience.

The fact of your leaving the diocese brings all this to a head. It means that the whole question is now being taken out of your hands and given to another. In these circumstances, I strongly recommend (if not done already):

- That someone set out on paper the entire case for not appointing this priest to any position;
- That this document be submitted for counsel's opinion on the position of the administrator in relation to the criterion of "unacceptable risk";
- That the same document be submitted (by you or the administrator) to a panel of prudent and expert people who would give advice on the obligations in conscience of the person in charge of the diocese.
- That it be left to the administrator to decide whether to approach the ACBC.
- You may wish to lodge an appeal, not in the serious hope of a different canonical result, but to buy time.

If you wish to speak with me before 15th January, I shall be at the parish house in Sorrento, Victoria (Ph. 03 5984 4374, Fax. 03 5984 4386).

Wishing you every blessing for the new year and your new role,
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Geoffrey Robinson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson