

REDACTED

2nd June 1996 Phone REDACTED

Dear Bishop Brian

I have enclosed a copy of a letter I sent to Bishop Geoff Robinson in response to the Protocol on Sexual Abuse. I would like you to read it so that you can be kept up to date with what is happening in my life. I did try and get a short letter published in the Catholic Leader but Bishop Michael Putney refused Ray Owen permission to print it, saying it was too controversial. He thought I should be writing to the Australian Standards Committee instead. This I found a real rejection especially as I had Myoline Carrick go through the letter first. It makes me wonder if the Bishops are really serious when they say victims will be listened to.

At this present time I am finding life extremely hard. The Woods Royal Commission, The Four Corners Program and the REDACTED Saga, have brought up many memories and pain. Along with the fact that my sisters no longer go to Church and are filled with anger and rage after finding out about Reg. Even though they weren't personally abused by him, they feel so betrayed and hurt. My sisters find it hard to accept that I haven't charged him and wonder why he has been allowed to carry on his priestly duties and still take communion to our parents.

As I told you before I had a great respect for RED both as a priest and as a good friend. To find out he was a paedophile was just devastating, and I have been consumed by feelings of anger, disgust, shame, guilt and hurt. I am sure RED feels I should be happy that he has changed his ways and is making amends but I am equally just as sure that he has no idea of the pain and misery that myself and his victims are suffering.

My own faith journey has suffered greatly and I am grieving for the faith I used to have and cherish. Now I no longer believe in the consecration and if and when I go to Mass I praise and worship God my way. I believe Christ is present in each other and present in the prayers that have been offered in the church and that at Communion we are doing it in memory of Him. I know you told me I should get back to Communion but I find it hard to sit in a church without being judgmental and most times I am better off staying home.

I am still suffering with depression, probably more so the past few months and I hate being like this. My doctor has suggested that I see a counsellor or psychiatrist but I can't see that this would achieve much. I did go and see Patrick Oliver once but haven't been back mainly because I find the drive to Brisbane too taxing.

There have been moments lately when I have thought the only way out of this misery is suicide but I have been blessed with a wonderful husband and children and I could do nothing like that to hurt them. I struggle to see where God is in this whole sordid affair but I know that He must be holding me up somehow.

I had a chat to REDACTED recently and it was productive. REDA realises now that what I am going through goes far deeper than personalities. He didn't understand the hurt people were feeling over RED and admits to being insensitive.

Thank you for listening and understanding. I may contact you when I am home in the school holidays. God bless and guide you.

Sincerely AYB

Dear Bishop Robinson

It was with much interest that I read the Pastoral Letter to the Catholic People of Australia from the Australian Catholic Bishops in the Catholic Leader. I wish to recognise what has been done so far and to encourage you to do all in your power to implement this 9 point plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to raise some issues with you as no where have I read that any Lay People have been involved in this sensitive issue.

Firstly, when Sexual Abuse is reported to the Church it is imperative that the victim is not abused all over again by the priest receiving the allegations. It would be preferable that he didn't take the accusations personally and not become defensive and condescending. His dress is most important as many have been abused by the priest in clerical uniform of black suit and white collar. Nothing is more off putting for a victim then to have to sit opposite a person dressed as his/her abuser was.

It takes so much courage to come forward after years of hiding from these very deep memories and scars. Not being believed and being spoken down to is like being raped all over again.

When counselling is agreed upon let the psychiatrist or counsellor decide how many sessions are required. To be offered 6 only puts unnecessary pressure on the victim and makes one think that this problem has to be addressed quickly. It is also embarrassing for the person involved to have to claim back through Medicare thus gaining the stigma of 'nervous breakdown' especially in a small town where everyone is known to each other. Then once again the person is victimised by having to wait for the diocese to reimburse the difference.

It was interesting to see that this pastoral letter has made allowances for 'other persons affected' by the sexual abuse. Have you considered the victim's family members? They have had to put up with mood swings, severe depression, suicide attempts etc. for years on end. When the victim finally gets the courage to give siblings a reason for the odd behaviour a chain reaction occurs. Once very good practising Catholics become angry bitter and resentful and turn against the Church and priest family member or priest friend and this is another burden for the victim to bear. Consumed by guilt for telling family and turning them away from the church is sometimes the last straw.

When a meeting is set up for the victim and perpetrator this should be done with the least possible pain for both parties. At this stage slinging matches are futile and only add to the hurt and misery. If both parties agree a prayerful meeting could help with the healing process for all concerned. If the victim chooses NOT to prosecute, some acknowledgement of this should be given. Maybe a letter from the perpetrator and the Church authorities.

When the accusations concern a present parish priest the parishioners should be offered counselling with the Dean or Bishop BEFORE the priest is banished out of the area. On going crisis care is required when several priests from the one area have

been accused, where people can talk about their anger, hurt, shame and grief. Qualified counsellors could be used to assist parishioners express their feelings.

If a place like St. Luke's is set up here in Australia let it be a prayerful place rather than one that breaks the Priest's spirit. He like the victim is still loveable in the eyes of God. We have to remember what St. Paul said to the Romans in Chapter 8 verse 38.

"For I am certain that nothing can separate us from the love of God, neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the past nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below -- there is NOTHING in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God."

When a support group has been set up by the Rehab. Centre and the priest may I suggest that the support group be informed of what allegations have been made before charges have been laid and the media have their field day. This would prevent unnecessary hurt and dismay.

Sexual Abuse by clergy and religious goes far beyond the actual abuse. One is never really free of the abuse especially if one has been brought up Catholic. Each time one sees a priest there is the silent questions of whether he is a child molester, womaniser or if he is true to his vocation of celibacy. The Spiritual Rape goes on and on when one is supposed to go to reconciliation and memories come flooding back of kneeling in front of the priest to confess the sin which he perpetrated. Then there is the question of his power to turn bread and wine into the precious Body and Blood of Christ when those same hands only hours before abused the little child he told he loved, and who was made to feel special by the secret.

He again uses his power by refusing to baptise a baby because the parents don't go to church, or refuses to marry people in the church because they aren't active church goers but it is okay for him to abuse the little children in his care.

Sadly, memories of Sexual Abuse invade the intimacy of one's bedroom, sometimes 20 or even 30 years later even when one is in a beautiful caring relationship. Songs, smells, certain gestures, rape the mind when suddenly one is a small child again and the loving partner is the Parish Priest. Even though these memories are only fleeting they are most nerve racking and unless one has a loving caring understanding partner, marriage and relationships have no hope of surviving.

The nightmares that continually invade ones sleep many years later have the ability to wreck any peacefulness that one might be reaching after many years of counselling. The horrible effects of these dreams are taken out on the victim's children the next morning when Mum/Dad become a screaming, yelling lunatic consumed with anger, resentment, shame and grief and much worthlessness. The children then go off to school wondering what they have done to cause such disharmony.

Yes, sadly, the Priest not only rapes one person, but her partner, children, siblings and parents. Please, I beg you, don't let this Protocol be swept under the carpet and become just a Publicity Stunt. Please do all in your power to ensure that this is carried out.

AYB