

Commission into Sexual Abuse

PICKERING R
1 Page 1 of 3**Marilyn Stefanile**

From: Bishop [bishop@rcd-abdn.org]
Sent: Tuesday, 11 August 2009 9:26 PM
To: Marilyn Stefanile
Subject: RE: Email from Peter O'Callaghan
Dear Mr O'Callaghan

Thank you for this e-mail.

I can confirm immediately that the funeral and the burial of Ronald Pickering took place on the tiny island of Papa Stronsay on Tuesday 16th June 2009. I can give you considerably more information, not all of it necessarily relevant to your enquiry, and if necessary I can probably obtain further information.

Papa Stronsay is a tiny island, about one kilometre long, in the Orkney group of islands, which are part of the territory of this Diocese of Aberdeen. The immediately adjacent much larger island (though it is only ten kilometres long) is called Stronsay. I emphasise the distinction between Stronsay and Papa Stronsay in case it may prove significant. The tiny island of Papa Stronsay is owned by a group whose leader broke away from the Redemptorists about twenty years ago. Until early 2008 he and the group (as members joined it or left it) was closely associated with the "Lefebvrist" movement and was therefore "out of communion" with the Roman Catholic authorities. For the last ten years this group has had a monastery on this island. Previously they had been located in South-East England in an area known as the Isle of Sheppey. Before that again, they were located in France, though the leader is (I believe) originally a Newzealander

In 2008 the leaders of this group approached the Roman authorities and requested, and subsequently obtained, removal of the ecclesiastical censures previously imposed upon the three priests who had made this request. (Not all the priests in the group agreed to make this request, and three remain "out of communion" and have left the group.)

The ecclesiastical status of the group as a whole (there are about twenty people involved, in all) is at this time being worked on in Rome and in my office, with a view to establishing proper constitutions etc.

On Monday 15th and Tuesday 16th June I happened to be visiting the group on their island, and discovered that, entirely coincidentally, this funeral had been arranged. Although I had no objection to the funeral, I did not take part either in the ceremony in their chapel or in the procession to the burial site some half-mile away elsewhere on the island. Therefore, I was not present at the graveside, but I did watch the procession from a distance.

I was a little troubled that the burial might be taking place without authorization from the local (civic) authorities and that it might be a "one-off" but when I raised these points with the leader of the group (the superior of the monastery) he reassured me that there had already been several burials there in recent years. On the other point I am not

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now sure – but of course, if the local authorities were notified, then that would now be part of the public record.

As far as I understood, the funeral and the burial had been arranged between the monastery superior and a lady who had been looking after Ronald Pickering in England in recent years especially as his health failed. She was present at the funeral and burial.

I do not have her name or contact details but if it would be useful to you I can certainly ask the monastery superior to give me this information. I would assume that she was and perhaps still is a "Lefebvrist" and that that explains her closeness to this group and her reason for asking that the burial should take place on Papa Stronsay.

As I mentioned in my letter to Archbishop Hart, the superior of the monastery was very uneasy about letting anyone else know that the funeral had taken place, saying that this lady had forbidden him to inform Melbourne. I told him that the diocese in which the man was or had been incardinated must be told and that I would pass that information on. I did not have any conversation with the lady – in fact, I do not think that I even met her.

I hope this reply has been helpful, even if rather too lengthy. Let me know if you want me to seek further information.

Yours sincerely

† Peter A. Moran
Bishop of Aberdeen

RC Diocese of Aberdeen Charitable Trust, a registered Scottish charity, No. SC 005122

From: Marilyn Stefani [mailto:mstefanile@vicbar.com.au]
Sent: 11 August 2009 01:12
To: Bishop
Subject: Email from Peter O'Callaghan

Please find letter attached.

Independent Commissioner
Peter O'Callaghan Q.C

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18/15
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10th August 2009

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Private and Confidential
Rt Rev Peter A Moran
Bishop of Aberdeen
abdn.org
Dear Bishop Moran

bishop@rcd-

I am the Independent Commissioner appointed by the Archdiocese of Melbourne to enquire into allegations of sexual abuse by priests, religious and lay persons within the

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Archdiocese.

Re: Ronald D Pickering

I have been provided with your letter of 17 June 2009 to Archbishop Hart, and his reply of 25 June 2009. The allusion by His Grace to "some matters of misconduct" were unfortunately correct. Fr Pickering was a notorious pedophile.

Fortunately, there has been no publicity of the death of Ronald Pickering. Had there been it would have revived the ire of at least some of his victims.

My purpose in writing to you is to obtain some details of Fr Pickering, which can be confidentially recorded.

Fr Kyne of St Hugh's Church Lincoln has advised that he was called to the hospital to minister to Fr Pickering. Apparently he had been a parishioner of St Hugh's living in Branston Booth, a small village in Lincolnshire.

There had been unsubstantiated statements that Fr Pickering had been buried on the island of Papa Stronsay. I would be most obliged if you could confirm this was the fact, and if possible explain how he did come to be buried there.

I trust that this will not cause inconvenience and I thank you in anticipation.

My kindest regards.

Yours sincerely

Peter J O'Callaghan
Independent Commissioner

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