

08/12/2005 15:00

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December 10th 1971

Det. I. Constable, D. Ryan and Mr. J. Howden,
c/o St. Joseph's College,
Wattle Parade,
MILDURA, Vic. 3500.

Dear Sirs,

I wish to acknowledge your letter of December 8th in which you brought to my notice very serious charges which had been made against Monsignor Day, Parish Priest of Mildura.

Following receipt of your letter I have made enquiries concerning these charges. You mentioned that Monsignor had been interviewed by Inspector Lewis and Sen. Detective Barritt on approximately November 12th and that, at the time of your writing, the result of that interview was unknown. I suggest that it might have been prudent, in view of the fact that the matter was already in the hands of the Police, to have awaited the result of that interview before stating as a fact that Monsignor Day had been guilty of immoral conduct over a period of years. I have been assured that the Police, who rightly take a very serious view of charges of this nature, have indeed investigated the accusations which have been made and that they have satisfied themselves that there is no substance in these charges. I am confident that they would certainly bring this matter to my attention officially if they were not completely satisfied.

I understand that there was a complaint made earlier to the Police to the effect that Monsignor Day was misappropriating Parish funds. Although, as Parish Priest, he is my delegate in these matters, no reference to any Police intervention was ever made to me. However, one cannot help wondering whether a determined effort is being made to discredit the Parish Priest.

In the circumstances, I am not prepared to discuss the charges which have been made with a delegation from the Parish. I understand that there could be serious repercussions were it to be known that confidential statements made by those involved in these allegations might be discussed with people other than the Police and I am certainly not willing to bring them to the notice of other people, particularly in view of the Police inquiries which have been made.

With regard to the question of moving Monsignor Day from the Parish of Mildura, this is clearly impossible under the circumstances. Any such move would be tantamount to a public declaration that I consider him guilty of charges of which he has been acquitted.

I appreciate your concern for the reputation of the Church and for the well-being of the School and can understand your anxiety when such allegations were made. However, I trust that the fact of the police investigation which has recently cleared Monsignor Day of the charges which have been made against him will result in your demonstration of loyalty to him at a time when he has been subjected to very great embarrassment and strain.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Robert O'Connell
BISHOP OF BALLARAT

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
VICTORIA POLICE