

2nd September 2002TOWARDS HEALINGSUMMARY OF FACILITATED MEETING

Held in Sydney 29/8/02

COMPLAINANT - ACREPRESENTING THE CHURCH AUTHORITY(DIOCESE OF MAITLAND - NEWCASTLE) Most. Rev. Michael Malone (Bishop of Maitland Newcastle)SUPPORT PERSONS TO THE COMPLAINANT - Adrienne Connaghan and Stephen VorreiterFACILITATOR - Michael SalmonINTRODUCTION

It was clarified that Mr. Vorreiter, who is a Solicitor by profession, was to be AC's principal support person for the meeting, and that he was present only in that capacity, and as her friend.

Further, it was agreed that this meeting was to be essentially pastoral in character, and that the meeting was not the appropriate forum for the 'crunching out' of figures should AC seek to make a financial claim against the diocese.

Accordingly, the meeting followed this agenda

(1) AC'S STORY

As AC had previously supplied a comprehensive addendum to her formal statement of complaint, and which ran to approximately 5 pages, she took the opportunity to elaborate on issues therein identified, or to raise new points.

In essence, she informed Bishop Malone that she had been rigorous in conducting an analysis of her circumstances. She said that while she did not like the title 'victim' in terms of it's application to herself, she is no doubt that the alleged abusive actions of Father McAlindin have had a profoundly negative impact on her life.

Indeed, AC identified two broad areas of abusive activity by the Priest, that is, the misuse of the Confessional to ply her with intimate and suggestive questions and information, and a prolonged history of passionate kissing/cuddling and the general seeking her out for a 'special relationship'. It was the later behaviour which directly culminated in an alleged sexual assault in 1963, at her home when she was some 14 years of age.

AC described how she had rationalised the so called 'special relationship's' abusive behaviour by over time effectively romanticising it. She said words to the effect that because of her vulnerability as a child from a broken marriage, and living with her grandparents, that she had initially responded positively to the 'affection', and to actions which had made her feel special and protected. Particularly, as such actions had come from a 'substitute father type' figure. And, she further stated that as an adult her romanticised rationalisation of this 'relationship' was underpinned by a belief that Father McAlindin had sought her out as a special person in his life because of the unreasonable demands of enforced celibacy.

AC explained that it is only since the lodgment of her formal complaint that she has been acquainted with the fact that McAlindin was in fact a serial predator of a number of young girls. She said that she is now aware that her relationship with him was hardly special, and that his actions were not necessarily related in any way to the celibacy issue. Accordingly, AC described the current difficulty, and trauma for her resulting from the recent loss of this protective 'romanticised' version of part of her relationship with McAlindin, and of the general challenge to her of integrating the now evident full truth into her life.

AC reported to Bishop Malone that for her the other area of abuse, namely the misuse of the Confessional by McAlindin, had never been romanticised as such. She said that this activity, which she variously described as a "travesty", a "perversion", "pernicious", and a strategy "to corrupt morally" had always caused her profound angst. Indeed, AC explained how in her mind she had attempted to juxtapose this experience against the romanticised version of McAlindin's other activities.

She said that she directly linked the transgression in the Confessional to her pregnancy at 16 years, her identified suicidal period between 16 years and 22 years when she said that it was for her "an ordeal to survive", and her two failed marriages. AC said words to the effect that she believes that her dysfunctional relationship with McAlindin did not predispose her to form functional relationships with other men. Indeed, she described how she had attempted to convert her negative experiences into a "positive false framework", in that she had known so much about sex at 7 years rather than 22 years. However, she said that despite such an attempt she had never been able to really integrate the effect of McAlindin's misuse of the Confessional. Thus, she explained how she believed that the damage occasioned to "the immature psychology" always resurfaces "when you don't have the energy or the bravado" to continually service it.

(2) McALINDIN'S HISTORY

Bishop Malone acquainted AC with aspects of McAlindin's history of which she was not aware. He informed her, inter alia, that McAlindin had been "stripped of his faculties" as a Priest of the Maitland Newcastle Diocese, and that he had personally liased with Bishop's in the Philippines and Western Australia to warn them of McAlindin's history. He also informed AC that he had caused McAlindin's case to be raised with the Police, although he acknowledged that any response by the Police would be, by necessity limited in the absence of at least one victim making a formal statement to them.

Bishop Malone informed AC that despite McAlindin's advanced age, that it was his opinion that the matter needed to be handled by the Police. And, AC evinced an intention to formally notify them of her allegations against McAlindin.

(3) BISHOP MALONE'S RESPONSE

Bishop Malone validated the fact that AC had formally brought the complaint, and he said words to the effect that he believed that the articulation of her story at such a forum was an important element for AC's own healing. He also said that he "would not walk away from responsibility to help repair the damage", and he said that he believed that the "first step" of his response to achieve for her a "sense of healing and justice" would be to support the provision of a professional counselling intervention.

Furthermore, Bishop Malone expressed to AC his shock at being made aware of her history, and the fact that he was "deeply sorry" that a Priest of his Diocese had so abused his position of trust.

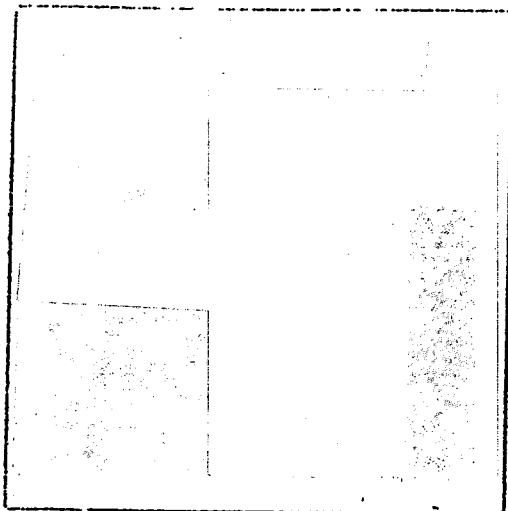
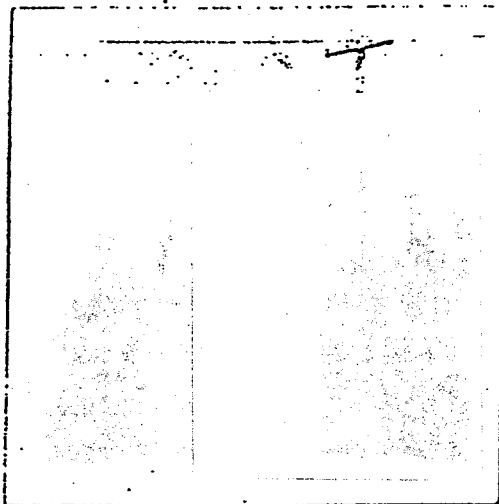
A SUMMARY OF AGREED OUTCOMES

- As AC had expressed a desire for monetary "compensation/reparation" to "mitigate against the wrong", it was agreed that she would arrange for a legal representative to formulate a statement of claim and serve it on the Diocese. It was further agreed that negotiation in relation to this issue would then properly be left to the respective legal representatives.
- AC reported that she had recently commenced counselling, and that she had found it helpful. Accordingly, it was agreed that she would henceforth send the relevant counselling receipts directly to Bishop Malone for him to facilitate repayment. It was also agreed that at some point a report would need to issue from the therapist to assist in determining the parameters of the Diocesan obligation in terms of this support.
- During the meeting AC expressed that she held firm views relating to how the Church might respond to the present crisis concerning the psycho-sexual dysfunction of some of its ordained members. Indeed she stated a desire to make a formal submission which might play its part in assisting to effect significant cultural change within the institutional Church. Bishop Malone stated words to the effect that he generally supported a change of culture as a response to the identified problem, and that he felt that informed, articulate and reasoned submissions, backed up by solid resources were crucial to inform the Bishops. Accordingly, it was agreed that both Bishop Malone and Adrienne Connagahn would arrange to provide AC with some relevant journal articles. It was further agreed that Bishop Malone would facilitate AC's formal submission through the National Professional Standards Committee for ultimate referral to either the November/02 or Easter /03 National Bishop's Conference.

CONCLUSION

AC expressed her absolute satisfaction with her meeting with Bishop Malone. She stated words to the effect that all the elements of her agenda had been covered, and more than adequately responded to.

SUMMARY PER MICHAEL SALMON



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