

15th August, 2002

Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle
Most Reverend Michael Malone
PO Box 780
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

copy

Dear Bishop Malone,

Thank you for your telephone call of Tuesday August 13th. I would like to say I appreciate the manner in which this matter is being dealt with by you and Mr Davoreen at the Professional Standards Office.

I probably do not need to say that I have mixed feeling about the information reported to me by both yourself and Mr Davoreen (by phone on Friday 9th August) about Fr. McAlinden's wider history of abuse. In my heart I knew it had to be, but I wasn't quite prepared to hear it confirmed so soon, and so definitely.

I had decided to send to you a slightly edited and typed version of my first statement because I wanted a sentence that Ms Connaghan had felt not apposite to be included. However, following your advice when speaking to you on Tuesday, I am attaching an addendum to my first statement, which I would like to be attached to my first statement.

I am also now able to be more definite about the beginning of Fr Mc Alinden's abuse. I looked on the hitherto hidden side of photos in an album and found that my mother had dated them. This does not establish a first time, but it does establish a time when the events were actually happening.

I am attaching copies of the front and obverse side of 2 of those photos of me in a long blue taffeta dress and bonnet. I wore this costume in a concert where I sang 'Alice Blue Gown.' I have very vivid memories of Fr McAlinden and events in my first statement when I was wearing this dress. As you can see from my mother's hand writing, these photos were taken in July, 1956 when (my mother informs us with disturbing exactness) I was 7 & 1/4.

Bishop, I am 53 now. By anyone's standards, I have had an emotionally rich and at times challenging life, and yet, with Grace and my small inner strength I've survived. Now, after 47 years it seems a resolution to those early, mind-marking travesties is at hand. It seems so surreal. How reaching are the days of the Numinous?

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

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(address)
or
1956
7/4 yrs

AC
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or
1956
7/4 yrs

18th August, 2002

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This is an addendum to my first statement of the 12th June 2002.

First of all, the following sentence in bold and italicised, is the first part of my response to the question on the form posed by Ms Connaghan and not recorded:

As a result of this complaint, I expect that:

I want it [the complaint] to be addressed; whatever the procedures, I want to be part of it. I hope this revelation of what happened to me as a very young girl will strengthen the argument for reform within the church; reform that would, I hope, bring about change in the priesthood, and that that change would address the issues of exclusive male authority within the Church and the issue of celibacy...'

Ms Connaghan will, I am sure, be able to confirm the sentiments of the response. At the time she did not feel it apposite to the process to write this response down as the form of the 'Statement of Complaint' seemed to require a more personal and not such a broad philosophical answer. I have given the matter much thought and feel I need to say that, even though I understand her reasoning, I do not agree with Ms Connaghan's interpretation of that question. It is important for me to find the resolution I need and to have all my thoughts and feelings in this matter formally registered.

Second, I would like to have as part of my formal statement my thoughts about what I feel is at the heart of the matter for me. I have, in my first statement, reported memories, re-collections of events that began when I was 7 (definitely) and perhaps even 6 years old, when according to Church teaching, I was able to discern right from wrong; I had made my first confession and my first communion in 1955. In the Statement of Complaint I did not include what I feel to be the consequences of those events.

The consequences of Fr McAlinden's predations, I need hardly to say, have been pernicious. He introduced a premature awareness of sex to a 7 year-old girl whose parents had been divorced since she was two and who was particularly emotionally and psychologically fragile. He did this, first of all by manipulative coaxings and suggestions in the confessional. Authorised by the power of his priestliness, he led that little girl into thoughts of 'impure touchings and thoughts'. He gained her trust, made her feel 'special' and introduced her to adult, sexual kisses; he led her through those years, and I know this may seem over-heated, to love him. He was her absent 'father', and he was her first associations with 'love.' I would not like my words to appear hyperbolic, yet Fr McAlinden penetrated that little girl psychologically and emotionally. I've been aware of that for many years; but I know it now at an even deeper level because I have had to unravel a knot of complex feelings that have leapt unbidden, from who knows where, when I made my formal complaint in June. *- I felt I was betraying him.*

Fr Mc Alinden's shadow has always been there in my life, and I have come to realise over time that a great deal of my deep-rooted lack of trust of men can be traced to those events. Yet, it has taken these past 2 months for me to unravel more of the complexity. I

have also tried to remember the exact nature of my sickness which caused me to miss the entire year of my Third Grade in 1957. I was sent back to my mother in Sydney and did not go to school that year as I was in bed all the time with 'asthma.' We were extremely poor as a result as my mother had to stay home to look after me. We survived on the goodness of the management of Catholic Mark Foys, where my mother was a shop assistant, for three months; then on the goodness of her friends there who 'took around the hat', there being no social security net at that time. I am skeptical of our capacity to fully fathom the human mind, but I feel that that year of bed-ridden illness was related to the effect of Fr McAlinden on that little girl.

Mr Davoreen and Bishop Malone have told me of Fr McAlinden's other abuses, *AL + AK* For a brief moment I could only think that at least none of us will be suspected of fantasising, but nor can any of us fantasise about ever being 'special.' The truth hit me. So I wasn't his 'special pet'; he had other 'special pets.' I share the dreadfulness of memories with others and also the same shattering of a tawdry illusion. We were all mere fodder for a man who used the protection and privilege of the Church to methodically plan and pursue his pedophilic desires. It was getting worse before it was getting better.

The third issue I would like to address is the matter of compensation. What amount of money could compensate for the damage that permeates a psyche? What is that Jesuit adage about capturing a child's conscience in the formative years? How do you evaluate the incommensurable? What about all the other damaged people in the world?

I have needed to tease this matter out or else the seeming tackiness of money only threatened to compound the injury. For me the concept and the fact of compensation has three dimensions: firstly, there is the intrinsic value of compensation as a recognition by the Church of its debt of responsibility owed on behalf of one of its rogue ministers; secondly, there is the legal value of compensation that recognises the mechanical facts of the crime and compensates for an integral loss; and thirdly, there is, perhaps, a 'poetic' value of compensation that carries with it the suggestion of a figurative sweetener after the bitterness of the experience. None of these dimensions of compensation establishes a 'how much', but it does establish an important 'why' for me.

If there is legal action against Fr McAlinden then I will testify to my experiences. In the mean time, I hope fervently that a resolution that will bring ~~some~~ peace to all of us can be reached soon. There have been too many years of carrying that monkey on our backs already. We all need the opportunity now to get on with our lives at last.

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