



DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

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A Pastoral Message to the people of the Diocese of Hamilton (New Zealand) and the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle from Bishop Denis Browne and Bishop Michael Malone

My dear sisters and brothers,

We the Bishops of the Dioceses of Hamilton (New Zealand) and Maitland-Newcastle (Australia) felt compelled to write to you to apologise unreservedly for any instances of abuse by Fr. Denis McAlinden. We express our deep sadness for the pain that resulted and continues to be felt. Whenever issues of this nature are raised the whole community is deeply affected, and we want you to know that we too share your pain.

Fr. McAlinden was born in 1923 in Ireland and was ordained in 1949 before coming to Australia. He served in several parishes of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Fr. Denis McAlinden arrived in New Zealand in early 1984 on loan from the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle and had returned to Australia by December of that year. Fr. McAlinden's faculties were withdrawn by the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle in 1993 and he died in Western Australia in November 2005.

When Pope Benedict XVI attended World Youth Day in Australia in July he apologized to victims of abuse by church personnel. Pope Benedict called the church to act with compassion, care and justice.

"These misdeeds, which constitute so grave a betrayal of trust, deserve unequivocal condemnation. They have caused great pain and have damaged the Church's witness. Victims should receive compassion and care, and those responsible for these evils must be brought to justice. It is an urgent priority to promote a safer and more wholesome environment, especially for young people."

As bishops we wish to take up this call. We pledge to make every effort to walk with all victims of abuse by church personnel, including the victims of Denis McAlinden. We pledge to listen to those affected by abuse and to offer them whatever support they need, for as long as they need.

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle operates a support service, Zimmerman House, for survivors of abuse by church personnel. The experienced staff of Zimmerman House can organise a range of services for survivors in their local area depending on their individual needs. Zimmerman House, can be contacted by phoning +612 49408091 or by emailing the manager helen.keevers@mn.catholic.org.au

With blessings and best wishes,

Bishop Denis Browne and Bishop Michael Malone

Thursday, 27th November, 2008

4 December 2008

My Brothers and Sisters

With sadness in my heart, I write to you about something that happened in the Gisborne District in the 1980s.

In 1984 Bishop Edward Gaines accepted a priest from the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle for a period of six months. The priest was the late Father Denis McAlinden. During his time as the parish priest of Tokomaru Bay, Father McAlinden was guilty of sexual offences that have left at least one victim still suffering after a passage of 25 years.

Such information as this always fills us with horror and shame that a priest who has been given such trust has betrayed that trust and brought shame to the whole of the Catholic community.

Along with Bishop Malone of Maitland-Newcastle I have offered a profound apology to the victim and offered every assistance that is needed. In addition the Australian Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle wants you all to know that it is anxious to make contact with anyone who may be a victim of Father McAlinden's actions. The Diocese makes an open offer to support and assist them in any way possible.

If you know of any such people I urge you to invite them to make contact with the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle through Father Darren or through my office at Chanel Centre in Hamilton.

Please pray that all those involved in this sadness will be able to see through the sadness and recognize that God's love for them is profound.

God bless you

Yours sincerely in Christ

✠ Denis Browne
BISHOP OF HAMILTON

To

SURVIVORS OF ABUSE BY FATHER DENIS McALINDEN

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has pledged to make every effort to walk with all victims of abuse by this now deceased Priest, to listen to them and to offer them whatever support they need for so long as they need it.

That support will be made available, in the first place, through **Zimmerman House** in Newcastle. It has an experienced staff that can organise a range of services for survivors, in their local area, depending on their individual needs.

Initial contact can be made with **Helen Keevers** at Zimmerman House by phone.

PHONE NUMBER at work; or
on mobile cell phone PHONE NUMBER ; or
at her home PHONE NUMBER .

or by email **helen.keevers@mn.catholic.org.au**.

If a call is made to Helen at her home it may be answered by a message in her married name, rather than "Keevers". Do not be put off by that. She is anxious to make contact.