



Diocese of Cairns

The Cairns Weekend Post Edition 30/10/10 Invitational Response by Bishop James Foley

This is a statement, at the invitation of the Editor-at-Large, to make a formal response to The Cairns Weekend Post article – *Unholy Betrayal: I was abused by a Priest.*

I met briefly with the Editor-at-Large on Friday afternoon 29 October, 2010. His information was largely drawn from documents filed in court containing, as yet, untested allegations. I advised him that there were inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the complainant's version of events which yet had to be aired and tested in potential legal proceedings.

While aware of legal restrictions and other sensitivities, I can state with certainty the following:

1. The first suggestions of child sexual abuse were raised with me, by the original complainant on 24 July, 1998, after I had already removed Joseph Sultana from ministry for other reasons.
2. In 1998, I had discussions with my predecessors in office: John Torpie (deceased 2002) and John Bathersby, which established that they had never received complaints of child sexual abuse by Joseph Sultana.
3. As to the allegations made in November 2009 by the second complainant, the Religious Sister implicated is now deceased. Other Priests and Sisters would swear that they did not know, nor were they informed of any child sexual abuse complaints against Joseph Sultana.
4. I sat with and heard both complainants' versions of events and each one of us genuinely struggled to establish the truth. However, there remain for me vagaries, contradictions and inconsistencies which can now only be resolved in the pending legal process.
5. To this end, and from the very beginning, I urged both complainants to take their concerns to the Police. The second complainant alleges in his affidavit that I made no such recommendation in the course of our meeting. However, I certainly did press for police involvement at this meeting. As I explained, Joseph Sultana had returned to Malta and only law enforcement authorities could compel his cooperation in any investigation of the complaint.
6. The Church hopes to reach with the second complainant a satisfactory resolution of this matter which is alleged to have occurred over 30 years ago.

The premature and sensational reporting of this matter may have caused further pain to the complainants and/or their families. Fortunately, at least, they have not been identified by name.

When these matters were brought to my attention, action was taken promptly and properly. Implications to the contrary do not help in ascertaining the truth of these matters nor do they assist in healing any harm which may have been done.

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