

3 pm - 18 May 2010

The following material is a Response from Bishop David Walker, that was given to the ABC 7.30 Report, The Age and the Sydney Morning Herald as a result of direct questions being issued on Tuesday 18 May.

On how many occasions has Father Egan been granted "explicit approval" by the Bishop to conduct services such as weddings, when did those events take place and under what circumstances?

- Fr Egan has made 6 requests for approval to conduct public ministry.
- Of these requests; 4 were granted.
 - (1) For a close friend's wedding
 - (2) For the wedding of friend
 - (3) To Concelebrate a Funeral for friend's mother-in-law
 - (4) For a family wedding in Ireland

(NB: 20/05/10- 5pm: Changes to the information in the above response. Bishop David gave 'explicit approval' for seven weddings and one funeral. Fr Egan was not given approval for two baptisms and one wedding.)

The Bishop states: *After the Towards Healing process, I have to further investigate the issue before making a final determination as to Fr Egan's future in ministry.* Can the Bishop give any estimation of the time it will take for this matter to be brought to a conclusion?

- The Towards Healing process has given me a finding using a 'balance of probability' basis as to the likelihood of the allegations occurring.
- Any outcomes of Towards Healing do not prescribe what action should be taken with the priests involved.
- Before I make a decision as to Fr Egan's future, I will be informed by the results of several professional assessments, which I have requested.
- My determination and the relevant documentation, based on these investigations, will be provided to the NSW Government Ombudsman, for review.
- The time these processes will take is not within my control.
- While this takes place Fr Egan remains suspended from public ministry.

Given the wide publicity in various parishes about the event, when did the Bishop become aware of the mass at St Agatha's in August 2009?

- I was not aware of the Mass concelebrated by Fr Egan at St Agatha's until after it had taken place.
- Fr Egan did not request permission to participate in this Mass.

If before the event what steps did he take to prevent it?

As above

What steps has he taken on becoming aware of Fr Egan's ministry at St Agatha's in August 2009?

- On 4 September, a letter was issued to Fr Egan re-enforcing that he is not to undertake public ministry in this Diocese (Broken Bay) or in any other diocese.

Given the Towards healings findings substantiating allegations of sex abuse made against Fr Egan, and Fr Egan's continued ministry at St Agatha's, putting him in contact with juvenile parishioners, has the Bishop reported the case to police as required by law?

- The Jubilee Mass was a one-off occasion that was undertaken without my permission.
- All applications for public ministry by Fr Egan are reviewed in the knowledge of the environment in which they will be performed.
- The Police were informed of the allegations relating to Fr Egan soon after they became known at the start of the Towards Healing process.
- We remain in contact with the NSW Government Ombudsman, who continues to be involved in the process.
- I have at all times taken advice, and continue to do, and will continue to do so, in regards to the obligations of all relevant NSW Legislation.

Does the Bishop approve of Fr Egan representing a school in his Diocese at church organised golf tournaments following the findings of Towards Healing?

- Fr Egan has not officially represented the Diocese in the wider community in any approved capacity.
- I believe the Golf Day to which you refer, was a social event conducted by another diocese.
- The team in which Fr Egan participated have played as team for 23 years – not representing a particular place. The school's name that was given was only offered when asked to suggest a name – it was not an official representation. As in the St Agatha's Mass, due to the confidential nature of the matters, and the need to allow a fair evaluation for all parties, the wider public including friends were not aware of any complaints being investigated.

FURTHER:

The protection from abuse of our people, both young and old, has been one of my major concerns during my 13 years within Broken Bay Diocese, and I have attempted to meet people where they are at, in their lives, in an effort to heal the wounds of the past.

These are complex matters and I do not deny that the complainants may feel that the Church has not acted as they wanted us to.

The Towards Healing process is the Church's attempt to have an established process to compassionately deal with alleged cases of abuse. However, it is not the panacea for all allegations of wrong doings within the Church. It is a very different process to other legal proceedings, a fact which allows the Church to act with compassion

without the rigours of higher levels of evidence needed in these cases, but this in itself means that the outcome remains subject to the decision of the Bishop.

I remain of the view that all those with complaints of a serious nature should go to the Police so that the matter can be dealt with in the most rigorous way possible. If a crime has been committed it should be dealt with in the established way. This has always been my view and was advised to, and reinforced on several occasions, to both complainants. Indeed they signed an undertaking to this effect.

On behalf of the Church in Broken Bay I again apologise to the complainants for the feelings of hurt and mistrust, which have arisen from both the allegations any shortcomings in the way the process has been handled.

Yours sincerely

Bishop David L Walker DD
Bishop for Broken Bay