



Speaking the truth in love

Eph 4:15

29 June 2017

LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY FISHER OP FOLLOWING CARDINAL GEORGE PELL CHARGES

Many people will be shocked, as I have been, by the news that Victoria Police have issued charges against Cardinal George Pell in relation to sexual abuse allegations.

Cardinal Pell has repeatedly and vehemently rejected these allegations and insisted that he is completely innocent. He will now have the opportunity to put his case in court and is determined to clear his name.

While Archbishop of Sydney and during his current role, Cardinal Pell has cooperated with parliamentary, Royal Commission and police investigations and has ensured that clergy and church workers have done the same.

He will return voluntarily to Australia to face these charges. While the Archdiocese will assist with the Cardinal's accommodation and support, as it would for any of its bishops or priests, it is not responsible for the Cardinal's legal bills arising from these matters.

In granting Cardinal Pell leave from his role as Prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy, Pope Francis has emphasised respect for the Australian justice system – which includes the right of every citizen to due process and the presumption of innocence.

Pope Francis also commented that during the three years that they have worked together he has always appreciated Cardinal Pell's honesty. Having known him for the best part of three decades myself, I can only support that judgment: the George Pell I know is a man of integrity in his dealings with others, a man of faith and high ideals, a thoroughly decent man.

Where complaints of abuse are made, victims should be listened to with respect and compassion and their complaints investigated and dealt with according to law. No-one should be prejudged because of their high profile, religious convictions, or positions on

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social issues. The justice and compassion we all seek for victims of abuse includes getting to the truth of such allegations. We must now allow the impartial pursuit of justice.

This court process will be unsettling for many of us clergy and parishioners, teachers and church-workers, school parents and others. I want to acknowledge the difficulties experienced by those representing or working in the Church and those closely connected through our parishes, schools and agencies.

I will keep you informed as I can (within the bounds of legal requirements) and assure you of my gratitude and support.

I ask you all to pray for truth and justice in this present case, to pray for our Church at this difficult time, and to continue your prayers for all those affected by sexual abuse. Finally, I would just like to remind everyone counselling is available from CatholicCare on 131 819 as well as our Safeguarding Office which can be contacted on 9390 5810.

Yours sincerely in Christ

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Anthony Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning and a flourish at the end.

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Archbishop of Sydney
