

Catholics for Renewal - News Update

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Law, Morality, Ethics & Bishops

Newsletter No.2 March 3 2016



The Old Bailey, London - Image credit: Shutterstock

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Abstract:

Whilst the Royal Commission makes progress in its meticulous and disturbing investigations into allegations and instances of child sexual abuse, within the Catholic Church in Australia the issue also has a significant international dimension.

Early in February 2016, a new Vatican information manual for new bishops was published. Among other things, it advised the bishops on how to respond to allegations of clerical child sexual abuse: "According to the state of civil laws of each country where reporting is obligatory, it is not necessarily the duty of the bishop to report suspects to authorities, the police or state prosecutors in the moment when they are made aware of crimes or sinful deeds."

A week later, Cardinal Patrick O'Malley, who had just convened a meeting of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, issued a strong statement not only contradicting the directive to the bishops but stating that they have a moral obligation to report clergy identified as child sexual abusers regardless of the reporting laws of civil jurisdictions. "Our obligations under civil law must certainly be followed, but even beyond these civil requirements, we all have a moral and ethical responsibility to report suspected abuse to the civil authorities who are charged with protecting our society," O'Malley said in a statement Feb. 15.

Cardinal O'Malley's decisive executive intervention came within a matter of weeks after receiving a communication from Catholics For Renewal Chairman Peter Johnstone in which the Cardinal was reminded that mandatory reporting of clerical child sexual abusers was not simply a Canonical matter but a moral imperative based on the explicit teaching of Jesus Christ .

The major part of the Editorial highlights significant divisions between Law and Ethics/Morality in relation to child sexual abuse. In separate and briefer comment it also reports on the first just published of what will be two landmark papers by Peter Wilkinson on the crisis facing many Australian dioceses as the pool of potential bishops capable of leading the People of God with prophetic vision and pastoral courage shrinks dramatically. Significantly, Peter offers suggestions on how the Bishop selection process might be opened up to a more widely representative participation. This foreshadows follow-up later this year by Catholics for Renewal and others.....

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Selecting Australia's Bishops: Finding a Role for All

Peter Wilkinson

Reprinted with permission from
The Swag, Autumn 2016

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Introduction:

Peter J Wilkinson puts forward a proposal for a process to select new bishops that respects the history of bishops' selection

and current laws and practice. This article will be followed by another reprinted article following the next edition of The Swag. The second article focuses on an analysis of bishops' appointments in Australia and a way to improve these in the future. **Read full paper** [HERE](#)

News and Opinion Pieces

The following Catholics For Renewal website News & Opinion items may be read [HERE](#)

Cardinal Pell tells royal commission he was 'deceived in world of crime and cover-ups'

Cardinal didn't have 'much interest' in claims about Ridsdale

Principal resists pressure to leave Safe School coalition

P*ell jeered as he denies knowledge of abuse allegations

Cardinal Pell dismisses claims he knew about abuse as 'nonsense

G*eorge Pell sticks to his story over the serial abuse of Gerald Ridsdale

Cardinal: Church made 'enormous mistakes' and 'let people down'

Child sex abuse drama wins Oscar for Best Film

Report: Priests abused hundreds of kids in Altoona-Johnstown Diocese

For 'Mercy Friday' initiative, Pope visits young drug addicts at rehab centre

ACU celebrates International Women's Day

Bishop Mulkearns apologises for Ballarat abuse

Francis' challenge to bishops

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