

THE RT. HON. TIM RENTON, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



As from

DPA

2nd February 1993

Mrs. Barbara Mills, Q.C.,
Director of Public Prosecutions,
4/12 Queen Anne's Gate,
SW1H 9AZ.

Dear

Peter Ball, the Bishop of Gloucester

I will preface this letter by saying that I have never written previously to the D.P.P. in support of or in opposition to anyone whose papers were about to come before you. I do so in the case of Peter, the Bishop of Gloucester, only because this is a man whom my wife and I came to respect profoundly during the years he was our suffragan Bishop of Lewes. He is a man of immense kindness, charity and humour, dedicated to serving God in the community. I imagine that it was just for this reason that he and his twin brother founded their own Order, to help bring people closer to a practical, religious life.

Peter, wearing his grey monk's robe and removed from all the normal episcopal trappings, might well be thought eccentric by some. Others, I am told, resented his opposition to women priests. But these are unimportant features in a man of outstanding Christian sincerity and goodness:

You will, I am sure, have received many letters from those whom he helped, practically and daily, in our Sussex community. I personally will never forget the leadership and guidance he gave

He gave us the clear lead forward after this tragedy that we all needed.

Peter has suffered terribly over the past six weeks, as can only be expected for someone who has dedicated his whole adult life to helping and providing Christian guidance, and who had just received the accolade of being made a bishop.

In all the years he was with us in Sussex, surrounded in his Order by young men, we never heard a breath of any suggestion of impropriety. However, I know him well enough to be certain that no punishment will be greater for him than any knowledge that he has broken his own vows of chastity. This alone will make him suffer for the rest of his life. To add the further shame of criminal action seems far too great a punishment.

I do hope you will not mind my writing to you personally, and that you will take these thoughts - which will be mirrored by hundreds in Sussex - into consideration when reaching your decision.

Your sincerely

DPA

