

Lambeth Palace London SE1 7JU

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000142 28th September 1993

STRICTLY PRIVATE

Dear Michael,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter of 22nd September. I am sorry that you are getting a little cross about my unwillingness to give permission for Peter to engage in public ministry in the New Year, but I am afraid I cannot do as you desire. I do have to consider the matter from all angles, and I cannot regard Press intrusion as a small matter. I have already seen the great damage it does to people and, not least, to Peter. It is harrowing to be the focus of a prurient Press and that alone would justify a very slow return to public ministry.

But there are other nuances to this that you need to know. When this matter came to a head earlier this year, I had to consider the case for putting Peter's name on the Lambeth Caution List. There is precedent for such action in respect of a bishop, well within living memory. Moreover, I had to face the searching question - if the same allegations and admissions had been made against and by a parish priest, would one not have expected the diocesan bishop concerned to have put him on the List? I did not do so, for in the end I believed him to be basically innocent, and as you well know, my personal regard for him is very high. But I will not conceal from you that the decision was one I needed to agonise over, and as you also know only too well, a priest put on the List is not likely to be restored to public ministry for several years.

I understand your position as Peter's brother, but perhaps for that very reason, and because you have been so close to the situation, you cannot see that it is by no means only the Press who would be up in arms if he were known to be back into normal ministry soon. Voices would quickly be raised from within the Church also, maintaining that less rigorous standards apply to bishops than those applicable to ordinary clergy.

I don't want to minimise the trauma and spiritual stress which both Peter and you have had to undergo since this tragedy first broke upon you, yet you must remember that it is only just over six months since he resigned.

So, for all these reasons, I have to say, reluctantly, but bluntly, that I am not prepared to be subjected to persistent pressure; indeed it is likely to prove counter-productive to Peter's own best interests. He has himself told me more than once that he is willing to leave decisions about his future in my hands, and I respect him all the more for that confidence.

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LAMBETH PALACE