

THE BISHOP'S HOUSE

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REV. J. R. WINDLE, O.D.

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February 10, 1993

His Excellency,
Most Rev. Carlo Curis, D.D.,
Apostolic Pro-Nuncio,
Apostolic Nunciature,
724 Manor Avenue,
OTTAWA, Canada
K1A 0E3

Your Excellency:

Re: Rev. Bernard A. Prince

Further to our telephone conversation of February 10th and your FAX transmission, I wish to confirm in writing the following convictions and recommendations.

In conscience, and before God, I must inform Your Excellency that I am adamantly opposed to Fr. Prince receiving any Papal Honour or ever being promoted to the Episcopate. The consequences of such an action would be disastrous, not only for the Canadian Church but for the Holy See as well, given the climate which exists in Canada at this time. I can say without hesitation that all of the Ontario Bishops and the President of the CCCB would support me in this assessment.

As Your Excellency is well aware from the recent scandals involving a Bishop, and a priest from Ottawa, the mere passage of time does not ensure that charges will not surface in the future since there is no statute of limitations for such inappropriate activity.

When Fr. Prince was first proposed for his present position in Rome (on the recommendation of the now Archbishop F. Franck), I explained to the then Archbishop José Sanchez (now Cardinal Sanchez), in his capacity as Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, that, while the charge against Fr. Prince was very serious, I would not object to him being given another chance since it would remove him from the Canadian scene. (Archbishop Ambrozic had already informed me that Fr. Prince was no longer welcome in the Archdiocese of Toronto unless he underwent psychiatric treatment at the Clarke Institute.)

I also took the precaution of informing the Bishops in whose dioceses Fr. Prince had previously worked of what had been brought to my attention and a copy of this information was forwarded to the Nunciature. (A photocopy of this material is enclosed.)

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- 2 -

However, Your Excellency, the situation has become more precarious since Fr. Prince's appointment to Rome. Recently it has been brought to our attention that there was not one but four or five victims in all (all minors who talk freely among themselves about their involvement with Fr. Prince), and that several lay people of the Wilno-Barry's Bay area, as well as a number of priests of the Deanery of Barry's Bay are aware of these unfortunate events. It appears that two of the victims are first cousins. Hence there is some general knowledge of Fr. Prince's untoward conduct and any papal recognition or promotion would surely result in animosity and "admiratio", along with other possible ramifications.

A further compounding factor is that recently the original victim came to see both Monsignor Barry, the Vicar General, and the priest to whom he had first reported the incidents. In his conversation with Monsignor Barry he asked three questions:

- (1) Are Father Prince's superiors in Rome aware of his past behaviour and activity?
- (2) Is he receiving any counselling to correct this abusive behaviour and tendency?
- (3) Is he being properly supervised?

The reason for the latter question is that the victim learned through his wife's friend that Fr. Prince was frequently travelling abroad and had dined with a member of the Canadian Embassy in Thailand who originated from this area. Hence the victim felt he was not being properly supervised as he was travelling alone and extensively.

The original victim, and apparently one other, are currently undergoing counselling (and have been for some time) to assist them through the traumatic memories of their experiences (which were of considerable duration - and not isolated, as we were led to believe), and hence the question about Fr. Prince receiving counselling. In Canada, when a charge is laid, such counselling is mandatory by law.

The victim asked for Fr. Prince's address so that he could write to him - on the advice of his counsellor - to inform him that he was "no longer in his power". This appears to be a necessary element of any cure from the results of sexual abuse.

The victim assured Monsignor Barry that he would not lay any charges (although his counsellor strongly advised him to do so), unless he learned that Fr. Prince was victimizing other individuals and that appropriate steps were not being taken by his superiors to obviate this possibility through counselling and supervision.

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- 3 -

Consequently, Your Excellency, the scenario which exists today is considerably different from when I first spoke with Archbishop Sanchez. At that time we were under the impression that the incident was isolated, in the distant past, and there was little or no danger of any scandal ever emerging.

However, the knowledge and extent of Fr. Prince's previous activity is now much more widespread among both the laity and the clergy than previously existed. Hence, were he to be honoured in any way it could easily trigger a reaction among the victim(s), or others who are aware of his previous conduct, and this would prove extremely embarrassing both to the Holy See and to the Diocese of Pembroke, not to mention the possibility of criminal charges being laid and a civil lawsuit ensuing.

I wish to point out to Your Excellency that this information is reaching us in bits and pieces, from various sources, including sordid details, but we have no way of assessing the total accuracy of these reports. However, once a matter of this nature becomes public it has a tendency to escalate, and, like the recent Ottawa case, it might become worse as events unfold.

One redeeming factor is that it would appear that the victims involved are of Polish descent and their respect for the priesthood and the Church has made them refrain from making these allegations public or laying a criminal charge against a priest. Had this happened elsewhere there would be every danger that charges would have been laid long ago with all the resultant scandal. Unfortunately one priest, who was talking with one of the victims who partially revealed Fr. Prince's activity while living with him in Ottawa, has been somewhat indiscreet in his comments about Fr. Prince, and has had to be cautioned by the Vicar General in this respect. The priest in question is also a good friend of the mother of one of the victims so he has been able to glean additional information to confirm his suspicions about Fr. Prince's activity and openly confronted the Vicar General about his suspicions and knowledge.

I regret both the length and contents of this letter, Your Excellency, but when there is so much at stake for the Church in general and the diocese in particular, given the adverse climate we are currently experiencing, any promotion for Fr. Prince, even for a Papal Honour, but most especially for the Episcopate, would have horrendous results and cause immeasurable harm. All of the Bishops of Ontario who are aware of this situation (and there are several) would most certainly agree with my assessment in this regard. They include: Archbishop Ambrozic, Archbishop Spence, Archbishop Wilhelm, Archbishop Gervais, Bishop O'Mara, and Bishop Tonnos since each of them was involved directly or indirectly with Fr. Prince.

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- 4 -

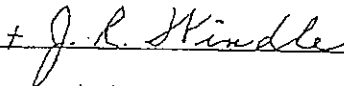
One final point. As noted above, the victim's counsellor has been advocating that he lay a charge against Fr. Prince to enable the victim (as he put it) "to get the monkey off his back" since he still suffers from periods of depression and anxiety. His wife knows the reason why. The victim has resisted this counsel and feels he can accomplish the same end by writing to Fr. Prince to inform him that he is no longer under his control or power.

However, as previously mentioned, a promotion of any kind would indicate to the victim that he is being further victimized and hence we could anticipate that a charge would be laid and a public trial would follow. This has been the pattern which has been followed in recent events of a similar nature and it is a situation which we wish to avoid at all costs.

I hope that the above information will assist Your Excellency in dealing with this difficult and delicate problem.

With respectful and prayerful good wishes, I remain, Your Excellency,

Faithfully yours in Christ,


Bishop of Pembroke