NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

# Australian priests offer support for deposed bishop

Tom Roberts | May. 3, 2011

Photo by Bruce Long, Copyright the Courier-Mail newspaper, Queensland, Australia

A national organization of priests in Australia issued a statement May 3 supporting Bishop William Morris of the Toowoomba diocese, while also decrying the influence of those who maintain a ?restorationist ideology? and apparently agitated for the bishop?s removal.

According to a letter Morris wrote that was read at all Masses in the diocese May 1, Pope Benedict XVI forced him to retire following complaints by a group of dissidents in his diocese who took issue with a 2006 pastoral letter that dealt with a severe priest shortage facing the Australian church.

See the update to this story: **Support for ousted Australian bishop widens** [1]

In the pastoral, Morris had listed some options, including ordination of women, that he noted were being discussed throughout the church. He said in the pastoral that the church might have to be open to such options as ordination of married men and women if the ?primacy of the Eucharist? is to be maintained as a distinctive element of Catholic worship. Numerous accounts about the pastoral note that Morris conditioned the alternatives with ?if Rome would allow.?

Morris issued the pastoral in Advent of 2006. The following March, the Vatican notified Morris that an apostolic visitation would take place. In April 2007 Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver showed up to conduct the visitation, and according to reports he met with Morris, his council of priests, diocesan officials and individual Catholics. He let Morris know by fax in May that he had sent his report to the Vatican?s Congregation for Bishops.

?I have never seen the report prepared by the apostolic visitor,? Morris wrote in his most recent letter to his diocese. ?Without due process it has been impossible to resolve these matters, denying me natural justice without any possibility of appropriate defense and advocacy on my behalf. Pope Benedict confirmed this to me by stating, ?Canon law does not make provision for a process regarding bishops, whom the successor of Peter nominates and may remove from office,? ? the bishop recounted.

?We are appalled at the lack of transparency and due process that led to this decision by church authorities,? said the statement released by the National Council of Priests of Australia.

---

**Related links:**

**Full statement of National Council of Priests of Australia[2]**

---

?We are embarrassed about the shabby treatment meted out to an outstanding pastor of this diocese who has faithfully ministered in the church in Queensland and throughout Australia since his priestly ordination in 1969,? said the association, which describes itself as an organization made up of bishops, priests and deacons.

The group said it is ?concerned about an element within the church whose restorationist ideology wants to repress freedom of expression? within the church and ?who deny the legitimate magisterial authority of the local bishop within the church.?

*NCR* posed a list of questions to Chaput by e-mail. He responded that ?any apostolic visitation is governed by strict confidentiality. This is for the benefit of all parties involved.?

[Roberts is *NCR* editor at Large. He can be reached at troberts@ncronline.org.]

**More of NCR's coverage of the ouster of Bishop William Morris**:

- **Bp Morris: 'You?ve got to stand in your truth.'** [3], Tom Roberts and Josh McElwee, May 5
- **Bishop's firing makes pope's priorities clear** [4], an NCR editorial, May 4
- **Support for ousted Australian bishop widens** [5], Tom Roberts, May 4
- **Australian priests offer support for deposed bishop** [6], Tom Roberts, May 3
- **Women's ordination group responds to bishop's ouster** [7], Women's Ordination Conference, May 3
- **Pope removes bishop who expressed openness to ordaining women** [8], CNS, May 2

---

**Source URL (retrieved on *12/12/2013 - 00:01*):** http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/australian-priests-offer-support-deposed-bishop

**Links:**
[1] http://ncronline.org/node/24440
[2] http://www.catholica.com.au/forum/index.php?mode=thread&id=74167#p74167
[3] http://ncronline.org/node/24471/
[4] http://ncronline.org/node/24447/
[5] http://ncronline.org/node/24440/
[6] http://ncronline.org/node/24427/
[7] http://ncronline.org/node/24428/.
[8] http://ncronline.org/node/24395/