

From: Church board of St. Albaan – The Hague, the Netherlands

(Eric van Brakel (interim chairman), Imelde Marchesini-Ruberti (secretary),

Charles Eysbach, Art van Remundt)

To: Members of the church parish of St. Albaan – The Hague

Mgr. Philip Draaisma

Mgr. Frank den Outer

Mgr. Tom Degenaaars

Dutch Central Church board, Ms. Caroline Veerman

Clerical Synod, Rev. Parcival van Gessel

Secretaries of the church boards of the Dutch Church province

The Hague, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2003

At the moment, there is a lot of commotion within our church province, and in particular within our church parish, with respect to the ordination of women and, consequently, the steps that have been taken by our episcopacy, the loyalty in this matter towards our episcopacy and the roles of Mgr. Ian Hooker (Presiding Bishop of the General Episcopal Synod (GES)), Rev. Frits Evelein and Rev. Wim van Vledder in this matter.

In order to get a good overview on the matter at hand, we have to go back to September 2002, when we received a letter from Mgr. Philip regarding the point of view the Dutch Church province has taken regarding the ordination of women. In this letter, it is stated that the Dutch Church province wishes to, and will continue with the ordination of women along the regular line, which is sometimes also referred to as the male line. After the letter was received, Rev. Frits Evelein read this letter aloud to all present in the coffee room after the H. Mass. We rejoiced over this and applauded this brave thing to do. We were so proud of our Regionary that we wrote him a card during the coffee break, in which we expressed our support and wrote words of gratitude. All present (i.e. members and interested parties) did this, including Rev. Frits Evelein. The letter of the Regionary was also included in our monthly newsletter of October 2002. After some time we received, among others via Rev. Frits Evelein, a request to declare our adhesion to the point of view that was adopted by the Dutch Central Church board. This adhesion was signed by those present and sent with an accompanying note via the Dutch Central Church board, together with the other declarations of adhesion of all church parishes, to Mgr. Ian Hooker, Presiding Bishop.

Supported and strengthened by us and by our whole church province, our bishops have continued along the path we have all chosen.

On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2002, Mgr. Frank den Outer (who honoured us with a visit on Christmas Eve) ordained three women in a minor order knowing that he could count on the support of our church province, including the support of our church parish. Ordinations such as our acolytes Ms. Mary Vos and Ms. Willy Evelein-van Vledder also received earlier from Mgr. Philip.

For good order's sake, we would like to emphasize that, as to the church board's knowledge, no-one of us has ever made known his/her displeasure with the way things were going regarding the ordination of women and the possible consequences for our church province. Therefore, we stand as one man behind our episcopacy, and are proud of the fact that women are allowed within the Dutch Church province to follow their heart, feelings and calling, and may, and can, therefore serve the Supremacy, and that they are not discriminated against in this matter.

On Friday evening, the 13th of December 2002, Ms. Imelde Marchesini-Ruberti phoned Rev. Frits Evelein to discuss another matter. During this conversation Rev. Frits Evelein informed her that Mgr. Ian Hooker (the Presiding Bishop) had just left his house in Moordrecht and that his wife, Ms. Willy Evelein, was taking Mgr. Ian to his hotel. Furthermore, he informed Ms Marchesini-Ruberti that he had been asked to become Vicaris General of the Dutch Church province, a function that he had already accepted, and that Rev. Wim van Vledder had been asked to act as Representative of Mgr. Ian in the Netherlands. He asked her to keep this information to herself for the time being, because he first wanted to inform Mgr. Philip of this step taken by him. He also said that he would make the news universally known by email that same night. Imelde respected this request and at 21.45 pm an email was received, addressed to several, arbitrary, members of the Liberal Catholic Church interested parties and others.

For the position of the Dutch Church province in this matter, we refer you to the 1st General Communiqué of the Dutch Central Church board and the Clerical Synod, which you received earlier by post.

On 15<sup>th</sup> December, during Holy Mass, several churchgoers noticed that Rev. Frits Evelein, who celebrated mass, did not mention in the prayer of consecration Mgr. Philip as Regionary, but instead mentioned Mgr. Ian. They alerted Imelde on this in view of her being a member of the local church management as well as acolyte. She, in turn, drew Rev. Frits Evelein's attention to this by email, and received on the 21st of December the following answer from him: "... I get the feeling that you (or others) have misunderstood something. I did not mention any name and have just said: "our Regionary". I think that in view of the current situation, that there is nothing wrong in doing this.."

By doing this, Rev. Frits Evelein deviated from the official text of the prayers, as they are included in the Dutch liturgy. He made it known that he wanted to break away from the church authority of our Regionary, to which he had previously adhered to publicly, and he gave out the signal that to him the current church structure within the Dutch Church province had been played out.

On 5th April 2001, the two-year term of service of first present Rev. Frits Evelein expired. On 16th July 2001, while apologizing for the delay, Mgr. Philip asked the The Hague church management for their approval on the prolongation of the term of service with 2 years, i.e. to the 5th April 2003. The management agreed to this and confirmed this, as is the Dutch custom, in writing to the Regionary.

One of the consequences of the actions of Rev. Frits Evelein is that on Monday 23rd of December 2002, we, as a majority of the church management, asked our Regionary Mgr. Philip to terminate the current term of office of Rev. Frits Evelein as first present Reverend of St. Albaan as of that day.

A letter addressed to Rev. Frits Evelein, in which the majority of the board stated the loss of faith in him as first present Reverend, was personally handed over to him by a board delegation, i.e. Charles Eysbach, Art Van Remundt and Eric van Brakel, at approximately 20.00 pm on 23rd of December. Rev. Frits Evelein was informed of this visit by telephone at approximately 17.00 pm. When the board delegation arrived in Moordrecht, Rev. Wim van Vledder and his wife, Mia van Vledder, were arriving as well at the same time. The delegation was asked in and they were offered coffee and tea, which was declined courteously by them in view of the circumstances. Charles Eysbach presented Rev. Frits Evelein with the letter of board, which was read aloud by Rev. Frits Evelein after some prompting. During the handing over of the letter, Ms. Willy Evelein went to the front door, locked it, and took the key out of the lock. By doing so, the delegation was in fact not able to leave the house and therefore locked in. Rev. Frits Evelein and Rev. Wim van Vledder assumed a very threatening attitude towards the delegation and they did not comply with repeated requests and summons to open the front door.

The atmosphere was very hostile and several extremely unpleasant words were directed towards the delegation. The delegation did not respond to these provocations, as they had already agreed before the visit not to go into a discussion about the content of the letter, and the delegation had made this very clear while entering the house. After they had asked for the hundredth time to open the front door, this eventually happened after Ms. Willy Evelein had given the key to the front door to Rev. Frits Evelein. It goes without saying that the delegation was very upset about the whole situation and the, in fact unlawful, detention.

The board sent the letter regarding the request to terminate the current position of first present Rev. Frits Evelein to Mgr. Philip, who immediately took the steps he deemed necessary. Mgr. Philip put senior Rev. Frits Evelein on the so-called "inactive list" on Tuesday 24th December. A courier delivered the official letter concerning this matter to Rev. Frits Evelein at approximately 10.00am that day.

*Further clarification:*

Neither the episcopacy nor Mgr. Philip has received up to now (2nd January 2003) an official letter regarding a possible imminent suspension of our Regionary. As is clearly written down in the 1st Communiqué, the Dutch Central church board and the Clerical Synod state that both they and Mgr. Philip need to receive the relevant official papers before they can consider a possible reply and its possible consequences.

Rev. Frits Evelein, as our first present Reverend, has purely followed his own personal vision and ambitions. He initiated contact and was negotiating with Mgr. Ian without everyone's

knowledge and went on to immediately accept the supposedly required position of Vicaris General. He did not want to take into account neither the existing order and regular hierarchy within our Church province, nor the consequences for the unity within our Church province nor the consequences for us as church parish in particular. Being the church parish were Rev. Frits Evelein was first present Reverend, we have been put by his actions in the centre of the crisis, a position we did not ask for. We have pronounced ourselves in favour of the ordination of women as voiced by Regionary Mgr. Philip. "A woman a woman, a man a man, a word a word." If this had not been the firm idea of the The Hague parish, we should never have signed the message of support. For us, as board, it is not acceptable and not ethical to abandon the episcopacy, which we have promised broad support. As the majority of the board, we have taken on our responsibility, and have acted thereupon in good faith and have followed the course that the The Hague parish had indicated earlier, and still wishes to continue.

Being put as a priest on the inactive list, Rev. Frits Evelein should have withdrawn and should not have celebrated the night mass on 24th December 2002. After Rev. Frits Evelein had made it very clear that he did want to celebrate night mass, and in order to maintain as much as possible peace and quiet during this night, the Dutch episcopacy, the Clerical Synod, the Dutch Central Church board and the church board of St. Albaan decided not to intervene. Mgr. Frank den Outer and Rev. Peter Baaij attended mass to support our community and at the same time to celebrate mass for us, in case Rev. Frits Evelein should comply with the decision mentioned earlier by Mgr. Philip

These are the facts in a nutshell. It may be obvious that your church board is fully backing our episcopacy on this issue. And will continue to do so. Furthermore, we do not want to put any pressure whatsoever on you, we will not lobby, but only supply you with all relevant information. It is up to you whether you support the point of view of the episcopacy and the Dutch Church province regarding the ordination of women. Of course, we fully understand if you do not want to get involved in the situation that has come about, but want to be left alone and attend your Sunday Holy Mass, which is your good right. We, as church board, find it however necessary to give you an explanation, and justification, of, and for, the steps that have been taken.

In a letter to our board dated 27th December 2002, one of our members of board, Ms Monique Kouwenhoven, indicated she wanted to dissociate herself from the course of action that has been adopted by the majority of the board. Already on Sunday 30th December, during the oral amplification, Eric van Brakel, Charles Eysbach, Imelde Marchesini-Ruberti and Art van Remundt indicated that they were backing this issue and would assume full responsibility.

As church board we feel, and realise, that we are part of the Dutch Church province of the Liberal Catholic Church. We will closely, and meticulously, follow all further developments on a national level. The church board has requested for a direct and open line with the Dutch Central Church board and the Clerical Synod, in order to be able to pass on all available and relevant information to our members. All official communiqués that are received by the secretariat will be sent to you as soon as possible after receipt.

Both from within our church parish in The Hague as from within the Dutch Church province, our church board has received declarations of support and gratitude for the course that we have undertaken to follow. We have also received two requests to hold a special general assembly for members. We will inform you on this matter in due course.

At the moment, the main task of the board is to ensure that the imminent schism within our church parish, as caused by Mgr. Ian Hooker, Rev. Frits Evelein and Rev. Wim van Vledder, is prevented.

Let us always keep in mind that all of us, each in his/her own way and path, are en route to further develop the realisation of the Divine Source within ourselves and we express the wish that each of us may judge the current situation in this light.

Imelde Marchesini-Ruberti

Eric van Brakel

Charles Eysbach

Art van Remundt