



ÉGLISE CATHOLIQUE LIBRE
PROVINCE DE BELGIQUE ET DU LUXEMBOURG
BUREAU DE L'ÉVÊQUE RÉGIONNAIRE

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL EPISCOPAL SYNOD.

Dear Brothers in Christ,

For the 27th time today, I have celebrated my anniversary Eucharist in gratitude for the privilege bestowed upon me, to become a servant of the servants of God, and to ask forgiveness for my many shortcomings and mistakes.

It is also a time of reflection about what my mission is as a Bishop and the role I must play in the performance of my duties. This year this reflection takes a particular significance at the light of the recent events.

We met last December in Camberley, and what was collectively decided there was certainly just, according to the law, but was it in conformity with the spiritual guidelines of compassion and love? Were we really guided by the Holy Spirit of Love?

Since that meeting, I feel very uncomfortable with the fact that I was pardoned for my mistakes, while my colleagues +Philip and +Frank, who committed similar offenses, were condemned, and their Congregations with them. To this day, I wonder if a little more understanding would not have been a path closer to what the Lord is expecting from His bishops.

As we are collectively the government of our Church, and that we have chosen the Rt. Rev. Ian Hooker as our Presiding Bishop, it is obvious that whatever he does, he does in our name, and consequently we must accept collectively the responsibility for the actions he has taken, even if we disagree with him.

If it is unpracticed for all of us to become involved with the issues of the Dutch Province, it is suitable to elect a Committee of Bishops to look at the matter, not so much at the actions of our Presiding Bishop, but at the complete picture, including the wisdom of the decisions we have taken collectively, and that have seriously limited Bp. Ian's chances to negotiate. Such review should look at the entire situation, at all of us, and at the wisdom of the mandate we have given to our Executive Officer.

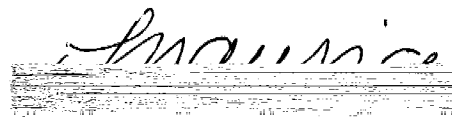
In the little book, *At the Feet of the Master*, many of us have accepted to be a good guideline for the conduct of our lives, it is recommended that we ask ourselves if the actions we are about to take are in agreement with what the Master would do. Even if we are not part of the review Committee, we should ask ourselves, if the actions we took in Camberley, and later through our Presiding Bishop, were in agreement with what our Master wanted. We should ask ourselves if we have truly acted as servants of the servants of God. In this age of secularization of social life, we may have let regulations and personal opinions take a precedence over our spiritual guidelines, justice above love, authority over ministry, secular authority over divine inspiration. We should also be ready to correct our mistakes, if we think we have acted too severely, or without enough compassion.

It is my sincere hope that the review of the situation by the Committee, legally requested by the members of our Synod, will loose its current personal character, and focus more on the needs of the people we are expected to minister and serve. Our Congregations are the Church of the Lord, not the authority of the Bishops. We should see Him in them. I fail to understand how we serve the Lord, or His flock, by depriving Congregations from the Sacraments and from the Clergy dispensing them.

Seeing the consequences of our collective decisions, it may be in the best interest of the Church, for us collectively, to re-evaluate the severity of the penalties imposed in Camberley, and come to a more peaceful, a more equitable solution, that is closer to the teachings of pardon of offenses, As today's scriptures say: *the Apostles were in one place and of one spirit*. Such unity was the condition for the manifestation of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The place we can be together any time is our own heart, and our united spirit is charity. Let us meet there...

I shall continue to pray for the unity of our Church at large, and for the unity within our Synod. May we all be inspired by His Love, and may His Holy Spirit descend upon us.

Intra Nos Regnat Iessu....

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Maurice", is written over a horizontal line. Below the line, the text "Ep Cath. Lib." is printed.

Ep Cath. Lib.