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Dismissal in Toowoomba - Tim Perrillo-Smith

If there was a single act which upset people most, it was the way Bishop Morris had, early in his time as bishop, shut down The Shrine in downtown Toowoomba. The Shrine had always been heavily patronised, particularly by the elderly and working Catholics of Toowoomba who would, seven days a week, come in numbers to mass, confession and Eucharistic adoration. The Shrine was a powerhouse of worship, prayer and Catholic identity - not the sort of place any kind of Catholic bishop could simply shut down. Years later, part of The Shrine was re-opened by Bishop Morris for adoration, although not as a place for regular mass and confession. Despite the partial reactivation of The Shrine, Bishop Morris' credibility never really recovered from this early act which in a way set the tone for his time as Bishop of Toowoomba.

By May 2011, the end for Bishop Morris had been a long time coming and had been much anticipated among well informed Church members in Toowoomba and around Australia. Bishop Morris' dismissal announcement was made at mass on Divine Mercy Sunday. William "Call me Bill" Morris had been sacked by the Pope after all: the Bishop got his announcement in before the Vatican, which came the next day. Some, though far from all, were stunned. The reactions were many and varied, across a wide range from fury, confusion, bitterness and despair at the way it was handled and unbridled joy. For a bishop who had been termed as "pastoral", William Morris' legacy was in fact a polarised Catholic community.

Crying Foul

Significant public anger has followed from Bishop Morris and his supporters, including claims of injustice, denial of natural justice

whether or not from lack of procedural fairness and/or lack of transparency, and lack of a process to appeal the decision.

To date, nobody - whether the Pope, Bishop Morris himself, or his supporters - has chosen to reveal more than general information relating to the dismissal decision and the related decision making process. Bishop Morris' supporters, however, have released some relevant information. Key



An able lawyer

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documents include Bishop Morris' dismissal announcement, a leaked letter, a seven page summary history of Morris' dispute with the Roman Curia, documents prepared by Toowoomba priests Fr Peter Schultz and Fr Peter Dorfick and a "Reflection" paper signed by Fr Peter Dorfick on behalf of a number of fellow priests. There is also a Courier-Mail article by journalist Paul Syrett, who interviewed Bishop Morris, whom Syrett wrote, "The Vatican in Rome has decided that the Bishop is guilty of questioning church teaching brazenly accusing me of heresy," he says."

In his dismissal announcement letter, Bishop Morris states, "I have never seen the Report prepared by the Apostolic Visitor, Archbishop Charles Chaput, and without due process it has been impossible to resolve these matters, denying me natural justice without any possibility of appropriate defence and advocacy on my behalf." The Schultz-Dorfick summary says, "The Report of the Apostolic Visitor has never been shown to the Bishop." Syrett in the Courier-Mail further says, "The Apostolic Visitor - a Vatican investigator advised. He spent 3 1/2 days in the Toowoomba Diocese, with the end result being Morris received an assigned memorandum that concluded pastoral practices in Toowoomba were 'deficient'. Morris says the memo was filled with factual