***19 Woorarra Ave, Doncaster East, Vic. 3109***

24 February 2012

Most Rev Denis J Hart DD

Archbishop of Melbourne

Dear Archbishop Hart

I have noted with regret youradvice in your letter of 21 February 2012 that you will not engage in any further correspondence with me on the subject of Papal authority as exercised in the dismissal of + Bill Morris, as you are “unable to state (your) position any more clearly.” I am very disappointed in your apparently dismissive response to the genuine concerns I have expressed, concerns on which you have not in fact stated a position, and concerns which must affect the faith of Catholics.

As my bishop, I have sought your advice on this important matter of Church governance. My concerns have been expressed in accordance with Canon Law which provides: *"Christ's faithful have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the church."* (Canon 212, par 3)

I have stated that the Pope’s actions in this matter seem to me contrary to the teachings of Christ since, according to the opinion formed by both the Hon W J Carter, QC and Fr Ian B Waters JCD PhD, *“Bishop Morris was denied procedural fairness and natural justice”* by the Vatican. Your response, based apparently on assurances from the Vatican decision makers themselves, seems to be simply to reject those considered opinions and to “*challenge any suggestion that (the Pope) acted unjustly*”.

You state that you are unable to state your position any more clearly, yet you have not attempted to address my fundamental concern, namely, *“whether the Pope’s power is absolute, to be exercised without due process or accountability, even to God?”* and whether you consider *“the Pope’s power (to be) absolute and unfettered without regard to the possibility of error or malice”?* This fundamental question of principle goes beyond the case of +Bill Morris to the governance practices of the Church in the proper and Christ-like exercise of authority. As I stated in my letter, I did not address the case for Bishop Morris’ dismissal, but rather the process as an illustration of the general exercise of authority in the Church.

I also sought your reassurance if I was interpreting you wrongly, noting that these are matters of considerable concern for the good governance of the Church, matters which may well affect the faith of many Catholics other than myself. You have not offered any reassurance as to my concerns. Rather, without addressing the key issues, you assert that you are unable to state your position any more clearly and that you will not engage in any further correspondence with me on the subject.

Your Grace, these are not matters of idle interest or of dissidence, but rather matters that go to the good governance of Christ’s Church and which are important to the faith of all Catholics. As my bishop, I have sought your counsel on a central aspect of Church governance, a matter which seems indicative of the need for the Church to seek renewal in the spirit of Vatican II.

As I said in my earlier letter, I would of course be happy to discuss this matter with you in person.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Peter Johnstone OAM