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Mr. Brian Cowen TD  
An Taoiseach,  
Government Buildings,  
Dublin 2.

3 - OCT 2009

October 30, 2009.

Dear Taoiseach,

I write in relation to the report of the Commission to Enquire into Child Abuse and subsequent meetings and correspondence.

In your statement of June 4<sup>th</sup> you made it clear that the Government requires further substantial contributions by way of reparation for the abuses in the past. That such abuses occurred in Institutions run by the Rosminians is regrettably true.

When allegations of abuse first came to the fore in the late 1990's the Rosminians took an unambiguous policy decision to try to discover the truth about the Institutions we had run. Over the past decade we have met with and apologised to innumerable past pupils and we have tried to establish good relationships with the various survivor groups - and we know that there is still a lot that needs to be done. We have also reported the allegations of sexual abuse which have come to our attention and cooperated fully with any criminal investigation. From the outset we committed ourselves to assisting the Commission to Enquire into Child Abuse and I believe that that effort is a matter of record.

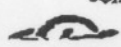
Over the past 10 years and more we have made an enormous effort to face and understand the past.

We are not, and never have been a religious congregation of substantial numbers and at this point in time we are 29 in Ireland, with another 7 on the missions or in ministry abroad. None of our members has been convicted or prosecuted for abuse, though a small number have been the subject of allegations. And yet we know that serious abuses did occur at our 2 industrial schools and we have accepted that we must play our part in making restitution for the awful hurt caused to children in our care.

To date we have endeavoured to meet the financial dimension of that responsibility. We were never a wealthy congregation and only ever had a small number of members who received salaries for their work. At the time of the Agreement between the Congregations and the Government in 2002 we contributed the €4.4million that we had just received for the sale of St. Joseph's Ferryhouse, Clonmel to the Department of Education. In addition we also handed over our service at St. Patrick's Upton, Cork to the H.S.E. to meet that same obligation (€7.1 million).

Over the past few months we have provided the panel of three appointed by the Government with a full account of our present financial situation. It will have been clear to the panel that we do not have significant resources. We have 5 properties in which we live; small portions of land at the rural locations where we have worked over the years; and we also have St. Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired, Drumcondra.

St. Joseph's Centre for the Visually Impaired is the focus of some grievance for us. At the request of the Government we entered discussions in 1999 to consider the reorganisation of educational services for blind and visually impaired children in the State. The result of those discussions was a commitment by the Government to develop a new centre for these services on our site at St. Joseph's



and this was included in the Programme for Government in 2002. Given that commitment, we delivered on a major reorganisation of services to blind and visually impaired children at significant cost to ourselves. However, thereafter all progress on this matter became painfully slow. That said, as recently as 2007 we were given to understand that we could expect a grant of €15 million towards the new centre. Since then the matter has effectively ground to a halt.

As I write we now have a debt of €4.5million, associated with the work for visually impaired children and our efforts to seek planning permission for the redevelopment of the centre for the visually impaired. That debt would not have been incurred by us had the State honoured its commitment. It should also be pointed out that since 2000 alone over €7 million has had to be raised through fundraising, to provide for the services at St. Joseph's, not to mention the enormous fundraising work in previous decades, of which no count was kept. Apart from the building of the primary school almost 50 years ago, the State has made no contribution to any capital developments in St. Joseph's.

In recent weeks, because of the media coverage of the process of reparation for those abused in Institutional care, we have been contacted by prominent members of the visually impaired community in Ireland wishing to be reassured that we will not abandon our involvement or commitment to the redevelopment of St. Joseph's Centre and the care of visually impaired children.

Clearly we find ourselves in an invidious position.

We are extremely conscious of the great hurt that has been caused to many children and of the desire of the general public and survivors of the institutions that those at fault be seen to make amends. Over the years we have tried to play our part in making amends, we have tried to face the past honestly and we still want to be of help to the survivors.

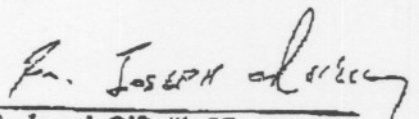
At this point in time:

1. We are not able to repay our outstanding financial debt associated with St. Joseph's, Drumcondra;
2. Should we be able to sell our land at St. Joseph's Drumcondra, at present, we are advised that the resultant income will not nearly suffice for the redevelopment of the centre;

While we continue to contribute financially towards counselling and other healing endeavours as best we can, despite our indebtedness, we clearly cannot make a further financial offer, although we would welcome a meeting with Minister O'Keeffe to see if we can contribute further in other ways.

We would welcome confirmation that our report to the Government panel is accepted as a full and true account of our situation.

Yours sincerely,



Fr. Joseph O'Reilly IC  
Provincial.

c.c. Minister O'Keeffe, Department of Education and Science.