

The Apology

In January of this year I reflected upon the 150 years of education and life at St Stanislaus College. During that reflection I said that we have failed in recent times to live up to our Catholic and Vincentian heritage.

We have failed to live the Gospel of Christ and the vision of St. Vincent.

I am very aware of the failure to protect and nurture, in a safe environment, **you**, the victims of sexual abuse: young men placed in our care.

This abuse, carried out by Vincentians, has destroyed and impoverished your lives. We have failed **you**.....

So, tonight, I stand before you as the Provincial of the Vincentian community. I stand before you to apologise to you unreservedly, the victims of sexual abuse by members of our community. I am so sorry that this has happened to you. It should never happened, but it has.

I acknowledge that your lives have been so diminished, so affected, so destroyed. Those I talked with in the last eighteen months told me of your hopes for the future, your normal development before these attacks occurred. Your futures were so affected by these heinous, criminal acts carried out on you by our Vincentian members. I am so sorry.

You revealed to me the pain and destruction brought upon your families and your loved ones. I cannot imagine how extensive this is and continues to be.

You have described to me the way your relationships have been deeply affected because of the criminal acts carried out on you. I am deeply sorry for the impact that *the memory* of these awful actions have upon you, memories that haunt you, your families and partners. I am so deeply sorry.

At the time you were vulnerable boys who had the right of being educated in a safe and happy environment. We failed you in not providing this care, a care your parents and families asked of us, **entrusted** to us. And we failed you. I am so deeply sorry.

I have met a number of you since I became Provincial. You have told me what happened and what it has done to you. You were gracious enough to meet with me, though it was clear that your pain, hurt and anger was very present. And so it should be. I am so deeply sorry.

But it is not enough to say I am sorry. There has to be more. There has to be a change. But it must be a change not in words but in actions. A change in direction in the way life is going to be lived. The school has responded positively and made changes at nearly all levels of the school to make St. Stanislaus College a child-safe environment. Such a change has been organised some years back by Mr. John Edwards and carried on by Dr. Anne Wenham.

But what about the Vincentians? Have we changed at all? **Yes**.

- The Vincentians have gathered several times to ask the question: How did this happen? We keep facing the reality of these actions and the impact on Victims.

We have put in a lot of new structures and processes to establish child-safe environments. I monitor the individual Priests and communities and I am, in turn, monitored by a panel of lay persons who are well trained in the area of child protection. I would be happy to speak about these changes with you at the break.

So, where to from here?

I remain open to you. I am happy to talk to you, either together or individually about your lives and needs going forward. I do not believe that tonight is the end of this discussion. It could well be the beginning of something else. **Come and Talk With Me.**

Allow me to end as I began: my profound and sincere apology, to each one of you, for all you have gone through as a result of the abuse you suffered at the hands of members of the Vincentian Community.

Fr. Gregory Brett CM
Provincial of Vincentians
Province of Oceania