



The Old Catholic Church of the Netherlands

Bishops' Office

Amersfoort, 21 April 2017

Brothers and Sisters,

The bishops (of the Old Catholic Church in the Netherlands) have noted, with great consternation, the arrest of priest Nico Sarot in Cambodia, where he was on holiday. He is accused of producing child pornography. Pending the results of a legal investigation that will take place there, the bishop of Haarlem has suspended him.

In the past few days, the bishops have, in press releases and press conferences, acknowledged the shock this has caused throughout our church. We have been quite open about the situation, and have also noted that the church had been aware of his sexual interest in under-aged boys. With this knowledge, it was decided at the time and after serious consideration, and taking necessary precautions and providing guidance, nonetheless to ordain and appoint Nico Sarot to be a priest in our church. Neither from the parish where priest Sarot then worked, nor from the board of the Schiphol airport pastorate, have there been any signals giving rise to suspicions of alleged sexual abuse by the priest Sarot.

In recent years, we have very sadly been confronted with abuse in pastoral relationships in a variety of churches. To our great regret, it now appears that our church too has not been spared. The faith which made Nico Sarot's ordination to the priesthood possible years ago has been severely undermined. As a consequence, the decision that was taken then would now never be made again, and the rules with respect to the protection of vulnerable groups, which apply for admitting anyone to special offices in the church, must be even more strictly applied.

We know that the current situation causes great concern and anxiety. We can imagine in particular that parents have many questions and we invite them to a meeting at 19.30 on 3 May to the Old Catholic Church offices in Amersfoort. You are asked to reply to the office should you like to attend. This will be an opportunity to share concerns and give the bishops a chance to explain the situation for our church and respond to questions as they can.

This whole situation only has losers. We therefore request that you pray for everyone involved. Particularly for the victims of abuse now and in the past, but also for the Sarot family and the priest himself. Finally, we ask you also to pray for our church.

+ Joris Vercammen

+ Dirk Jan Schoon