

## The Church's Culture of Clergy Abuse

### What You *Didn't* See in the Long Island Catholic...and VOTF's Response:

**The New York Times**

November 27, 2009

#### Report Says Irish Bishops and Police Hid Abuse

By SARAH LYALL

**LONDON — The Roman Catholic Church and the police in Ireland systematically colluded in covering up decades of child sex abuse by priests in Dublin, according to a scathing report released Thursday.**

**The cover-ups spanned the tenures of four Dublin archbishops and continued through to the mid-1990s and beyond, even after the church was beginning to admit to its failings and had professed that it was confronting abuse by its priests. But rather than helping the victims, the church was concerned only with “the maintenance of secrecy, the avoidance of scandal, the protection of the reputation of the church, and the preservation of its assets,” said the 700-page report, prepared by a group appointed by the Irish government and called the Commission of Investigation Into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin.**

In a statement, the current archbishop, Diarmuid Martin, acknowledged the “revolting story” of abuses that the report detailed, saying, “No words of apology will ever be sufficient.” He added, “The report highlights devastating failings of the past.”

The report is the latest in a series of damning revelations about the church. In May, a report chronicled the sexual, emotional and physical abuse of orphans and foster children over 60 years in a network of church-run residential schools meant to care for the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. Although that report portrayed a church that seemed institutionally broken, with guilt spread among many, the new one attaches particular blame to those at the top. It reserved particular criticism for the police and for four archbishops of Dublin: John Charles McQuaid, who died in 1973; Dermot Ryan, who died in 1984; Kevin McNamara, who died in 1987; and Cardinal Desmond Connell, who retired in 2004. The report said those four knew of the abuse, but did little about it.

The report, which took three years to prepare, focused on the way complaints about abuse by priests had been handled. It looked into the cases of 46 priests who had been the subject of scores of complaints from about 320 children from 1975 to 2004. Of the 46 priests, 11 have pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting children or have been convicted of that crime. The rest are dead or have not been prosecuted.

The report said the Irish police effectively gave the church impunity and often referred abuse complaints back to the archdiocese for internal investigations. The police said Thursday that they regretted their failure to act. “Because of acts or omissions, individuals who sought assistance did not always receive the level of response or protection which any citizen in trouble is entitled to expect,” Ireland’s police commissioner, Fachtna Murphy, said, adding he was “deeply sorry.”

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Cardinal Connell apologized in a statement, expressing “bitter regret that failures on my part contributed to the suffering of victims in any form.”

The report details examples of priests who were blatant, notorious abusers, but who were allowed to continue without punishment or censure. One priest admitted to abusing more than 100 children. Another said he had abused, on average, a child every two weeks for 25 years.

One parish priest whose case was examined in the report, the Rev. James McNamee, was locally infamous for his behavior over more than 30 years. Early in Father McNamee's career, an altar boy said he had seen the priest "bathing with naked adolescent boys and placing the boys on his shoulders"; a parishioner said he had seen the priest exercising in the nude with boys in his backyard. Numerous complaints against Father McNamee were looked into at various times, and various officials expressed concern, but no action was taken, by either the priests or the nuns who worked with him, the Catholic officials who fielded dozens of allegations, or the police. Father McNamee died in 2002, professing that he had done nothing wrong.

The Irish government vowed to make amends to the victims. The justice minister, Dermot Ahern, promised that "the persons who committed these dreadful crimes — no matter when they happened — will continue to be pursued."

### ***Sound Familiar?***

***It didn't just happen in the U.S.; it happened throughout our Church.***

### **Voice of the Faithful's Response:**

#### **VOTF CALLS FOR A VATICAN INVESTIGATION OF BISHOPS**

November 27, 2009

**Dublin Report Sheds New Light on Bishops' Actions**

Details from the Dublin Archdiocese report are shocking, as once again the world's Catholics learn about abuse, cover-up, and ongoing attempts to prevent full disclosure. This time it is the bishops of Ireland whose deeds—and lack of accountability—are on display. As in other countries, Ireland's bishops put the needs of the institution above the Church's most vulnerable members: children. Children were exposed to predatory priests again and again because bishops in charge failed to remove sex abusers from our midst. Voice of the Faithful National and the Voice of the Faithful Ireland affiliate call for a global investigation by the Vatican into such actions.

The details from Dublin are terrifying, and yet they are also familiar. This is not the first time we hear that bishops knowingly transferred predator priests from parish to parish without warning parishioners. Nor is it the first time we hear of bishops attempting to cover up their actions. However, this *is* the first time we have learned of so many bishops involved in covering up a web of crimes. The Dublin inquiry reveals the involvement of at least 102 priests in the abuses and numerous bishops—including at least four archbishops—in the cover-ups.

"Enough is enough! We call upon the Vatican to investigate the actions of Catholic bishops around the globe. We know from experience that the behavior of the Dublin hierarchy is not an isolated incident," says Voice of the Faithful President Dan Bartley. "We fear there are still many more such misdeeds worldwide. We cannot afford to sit back and wait. Those responsible for the harm done to the Catholic Church and through them to the wider society must be held accountable. We have waited too long for resolution to what has become a global Catholic nightmare. Bring the bishops to justice now."

***Votf-li.org***