

**The ‘Murphy Report’
(Commission to investigate the handling of allegations and complaints of child
sexual abuse made against clergy operating under the aegis of the Catholic
Archdiocese of Dublin)**

A Public Meeting hosted by the Parish Pastoral Councils of Malahide and Yellow Walls Parishes was held on Wednesday 2nd. December 2009 in the Grand Hotel, Malahide. Approximately one hundred people attended.

After a brief welcome, a short prayer and reference to the Child Protection Policies and Representatives of both Parishes, contributions and discussion began. The following is an ‘aide memoir’ record of what was said -

I am shocked and devastated to hear of the suffering of children over many decades. The lack of responsibility shown by Auxiliary Bishops and the Vatican is a disgrace. In 1922 guidelines, written in Latin, on how to handle child sex abuse were sent, in secrecy, to Bishops. These guidelines were kept in secret archives, with the Bishop having sole access. Structures and procedures should reflect the Holy Spirit, who lives in all of us, not just in Bishops. It is time the Holy Spirit be allowed to be expressed in the laity, we are not just the laity, we are People of God. This crisis calls for major reform of the way the diocese is run. There should be a Council of the People of God, building on the present Pastoral Councils, which works with the Archbishop. Doing nothing is not an option. There are major problems with the administration and management structures and procedures of the archdiocese. Nobody seems to have been in authority or responsible. There are over one hundred autonomous units in the Catholic Church – each diocese is a separate kingdom. The problem is the ‘cover-up’ – this must be changed.

My young daughter will read about this one day in the future and ask what was done about it. Bishop Murray and other Bishops should stand up and take responsibility for what they have done. Marie Collins was raped at thirteen years old while in Hospital, Marie is shattered by the silence of the Vatican. She fought for twenty five years for justice, she is decimated and shattered by how the Church has dealt with it, with her, and with others. She and Andrew Madden et al should be commended for their courage and integrity.

Is anyone supporting Archbishop Martin – just two fellow Bishops phoned him since the report was published ?

We should write to Bishop Martin and say there must be resignations, and that those responsible for the bad handling of this must take responsibility for their actions.

Hans Kung said years ago that ‘an unreformed church will carry no conviction’. The word apologetics was used - I had to look up its meaning – reasoned defence especially of Christianity.

We must support our own good local priests – they are hurting also. Some have been falsely accused – guilty until proved innocent.

How did those dreadful monsters get into the priesthood, were they not vetted?

Some abused turned to drugs, alcohol, suicide, and had failed marriages, where were the shepherds who should have been guarding their flocks, they were sadly missing and did not want to know, like Pilate they handed them on.

Are the survivors now being listened to and asked what is best for them - no.

A speaker observed that the words continually heard are sorry and closure, the word forgiveness was missing. Jesus on the cross asked his Father for forgiveness for those who crucified Him, the Hierarchy, as a group, should seek the forgiveness of the flocks they have charge over, without forgiveness there is no sorrow and no closure.

The media is dominated by those hostile to the Church, they are trying to destroy our faith and to remove the influence of the church, especially from the schools.

We should not blame the whole Church for the abuse – only certain parts and individuals. We can offer our time and skills to work in a helpful with children who need help. I have been working with children for years and we could do much more to help.

The news is bad, bad, bad, but nothing to what these children suffered, there must be accountability. If there is proof, the Police must come in and do their duty, these people must be brought before the courts and stand accountable, they must be brought to proper account.

Thank you to the Parish Pastoral Councils for this meeting.

Jesus said ‘forgive them for they know not what they do, but they did know what they were doing.

We must ensure any Priest, Teacher, or anybody working with children is vetted. Does the Parish Pastoral Council have any authority to view any new Priest coming into the Parish?

No. The Parish Pastoral Council has no role in the appointment of priests to the Parish, unlike the Select Vestry in the Church of Ireland.

I was shocked at the media situation where Bishop Martin was verbally abused at the press conference in Archbishop House, where he was told he was Satan and should not be called Reverend or Your Grace and that the Pope was no better. We must contact Bishop Martin and stand by him.

Those responsible for this cover up must be brought to account, some are now dead and are accountable to God. If there is proof that children were endangered, then the Police should deal with it. We are all equal under the law.

I have worked for many years in the Diocese and am saddened to now know that I was serving on diocesan committees with some who share responsibility for the abuse.

We should have a Forum for the laity where we all work together, laity and Priests. We should safeguard that proper structures are in place so situations are looked at before they become problems.

Let Bishop Martin know that he is not standing alone in this situation. We should have a healing liturgy and support one another, and reflect on our Christian values.

I am sick and disgusted with people who devoted their lives to serving God and yet let down each and every one by their terrible behaviour.

Many journalists hate the Church and use this as an excuse to attack the Church.

Survivors need our prayers. Pray that the Bishops see the Light of God and do what God wants them to do.

What message are our children getting from all of this. As a teacher working with children I am aware they are watching how we react. Let them see that justice has been done. How can anyone, let alone a Cardinal, speak of 'mental reservation' as opposed to lying, would you accept this from anybody - no.

I was aghast and disgusted at what happened to children and it must not ever happen again. There was cover up and this must never happen again either.

We are part of the Church but the Hierarchy have set up a system of them and us, it is time now for reform.

Why did this happen? Abuse is about control. Why did these men seek out the Church, why, why, why, let's find out.

This Church is ours, we want to run it, we want reform. I don't know how to change the hierarchy structure. These reports have come from all over the world – the USA, Australia, Canada, Ireland. I'm sick of reading about it. The hierarchy needs reform. Rome is too far away, we should reform ourselves. We need a new beginning for the Church.

The four previous Archbishops were all academics, they were not Parish Priests or had never served in a Parish, they were totally out of touch with their parishioners, when Bishop Martin moves on will we get another academic?.

I was in a seminary in the 60's and I cried when I read the report. We had so much about the Vatican 2 Church. Senior clergy have so much power. The Church is a hierarchy and a patriarchy, is entrenched. Christ always had women with him in his group. We are all suffering now.

Bishop Martin had said this was theft of childhood, these children were robbed for life, we say, in case of theft, you call in the Police.

Failure of leadership in the Church is at the root of this problem, change the leadership. How are we going to change the leadership, we don't know how to change the Hierarchy.

We need reform. We need to look at things in a more spiritual way. Children are idealistic and respond to honesty, we hope what is decided is the right thing.

Our Justice and Peace group have done projects in Jerusalem and India. Perhaps they should take on the injustice of this matter and concentrate on Dublin ?.

The report described extraordinary cover up in the way Priests were moved around within working class communities and Parishes in the Diocese, it has to be addressed by those responsible. Cover up is the issue and it must be addressed.

Gerard Tanham PP was invited to comment - We priests are also greatly upset at the damage and hurt to hundreds of children by priests who are supposed to represent Jesus – whose central message and life was about compassion and caring, especially for the hurting and vulnerable. There is disgust about this abuse of children and also great anger about the way Bishops and other clergy dealt with the victims. The abusers are mainly responsible, but so also is anyone who knowingly put any child in danger of being abused. The Gardai and DPP will investigate this aspect – this needs to be just and fair. Why did it happen? I understand that ordinary personality tests which have been used in screening student-priests do not reveal paedophile tendencies. Most abusers seem normal – can be socially skilled and psychologically normal. At least four of the students whom I studied alongside in the seminary for seven years became abusers of children, and we did not suspect anything. Many priest-abusers can be even charming, likeable and good priests in many respects. I knew nothing about child sexual abuse by priests until 1992 or 1993. Some priests obviously knew about individual cases which happened in their parish, but equally I know of priests who were serving alongside abuser-priests in the same parish and knew nothing about it. It is secret by nature, and controlled, and denied. Much has been learned about paedophilia by mental health professionals and others in the last twenty years. I've read that there are several 'red flags' to be looked out for - confusion about sexual orientation; having childish interests and behaviour – being most at ease with and understanding children well; lack of any per intimate relationships – no adult best friends; extremes in developmental sexual experiences – either excessive or a total lack of normal developmental sexual experiences; a personal history of childhood sexual abuse – a study of many priests undergoing treatment in a facility for abuser-priests in the USA found that 62% of them had themselves been sexually abused as children – an extraordinary fact; excessive, dependent, passive, conforming personalities – often deferential to authority. Etc.

And why did the church authorities act as they did in handling the allegations? Perhaps because of the culture of the church – the church leadership is hierarchic, patriarchic, male, more than a bit imperial, centrally controlled and controlling, and secretive re

sensitive issues. Until '95, the church in Dublin tried to handle the allegations secretly – as laid down by Canon law. And legal advisors cautioned about admitting liability. And the management roles and authority of individual Auxiliary Bishops varied – especially before the 90s.

I see hope in the new Parish Pastoral Councils – they can develop and form a Diocesan Pastoral Council which can contribute to better leadership structures of the church. There is clear need to develop better leadership structures involving all the People of God – laity, religious, clergy and all 'Church Order' issues. There is also a need to review and develop church doctrine including sexual morality doctrine.

The Child Protection Guidelines of '96, the arrival of Archbishop Diarmuid and his reforms, his full cooperation with the Abuse Commission, the setting up of the Child Protection Service in '03, with its professional lay staff dealing since then with allegations, support of victims and treatment and supervision of priest-abusers, the setting up of the Parish Pastoral Councils and Parish Child Protection Representatives is cause for hope. But the church needs to be rebuilt fundamentally – church order and doctrinal matters need to be addressed.

Brendan Fleming (Chairperson Yellow Walls PPC) and Joe McDonnell (Vice-Chairperson Malahide PPC) thanked everyone for their contribution. They undertook to have these notes available shortly in both parishes, to send a copy of the notes to Archbishop Diarmuid in hopes of them being helpful to him and Auxiliary Bishops and to the National Episcopal Conference. Any response will be made known in both parishes.

5/12/'09