

Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish Johnstown Killiney

Murphy Report on Clerical Child Abuse in the Dublin Archdiocese

Meeting of Parishioners in Parish Pastoral Centre on 22 March 2010

1. The meeting was called by the Parish Pastoral Council to provide an opportunity for parishioners to express any views, feelings, thoughts or questions which they might have on the contents of the report, on its implications for the Church generally or on its impact on their own faith. It took place just two days after the publication of Pope Benedict's Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland.
2. Ms Caroline Murphy acted as meeting facilitator. In her introductory remarks she said that it provided parishioners with an opportunity to think and talk about what was going on in our Church. The Church had been badly damaged and it was only going to recover from the ground up.
3. Fr Paddy McCafferty, a priest originally from Belfast but now working in the Dublin Archdiocese and a victim of clerical sexual abuse himself, spoke of his own experience, the effect it had on him and how he had responded to the abuse and to the way in which the Church authorities had dealt with his abuser. He said that the subject was not a pleasant one but it was important for the future of the Church that it be addressed. He noted that child sexual abuse was not confined to the Catholic Church but occurred in families, in schools, in sporting organisations and in other institutions and situations. He pointed out, however, that clerical abuse was different because a priest, by virtue of his ordination, acts in the person of Christ. In that context child sexual abuse by a priest was not only a heinous crime against the child but was tantamount to sacrilege.
4. In order to ensure that everybody present had an opportunity to speak the attendance (around 120 people) was divided into groups of 6 to 8 people. Caroline Murphy suggested that the discussion be centred around three questions:
 - I. What elements of the report and the situation in the Church made people feel sad?

II. What elements made people angry? And

III. What elements gave reason to hope for the future of the Church?

The groups were invited to write down the main views expressed at their table on flip chart sheets and to report back to the full meeting. Caroline explained that the meeting was being structured in this way in order to give everybody present an opportunity to express their views, including those who might be less confident about speaking in the setting of the larger gathering. She also explained that the three questions were formulated in a way that was intended to encourage a completely open discussion. Parishioners were free to express any concerns or views which they had and these would be recorded. At the request of a speaker from the floor it was agreed that the record of the views expressed at the meeting would be forwarded to the Archbishop with a request for a response.

5. The meeting was a lively one with many views being expressed. There was much robust criticism of the abusers and of the handling of the complaints by the Pope and by bishops and priests. As well as the sadness and anger voiced there were also many expressions of hope for the future. The meeting was a listening exercise. Neither the facilitator, the Parish clergy nor members of the Parish Pastoral Council sought to steer the discussion in any particular direction or to take a position for or against any of the opinions expressed. Inevitably, given the format of the meeting similar points and themes were raised in the different groups. Contradictory points were made even within groups. Appendix I to this note provides a summary of the points raised in the meeting. Appendix II contains a full transcript of the points written on the flip chart sheets used at the meeting.

Paddy Barry

Chairman

Parish Pastoral Council

11 May, 2010

Summary of points made at Parish Meeting of 22 March 2010

1. *Elements that made people sad*

- Damage to victims
- Loss of childhood
- Sadness that victims were not believed
- Damage to our Church
- Disaffection/Disillusionment of young people with the Church
- Betrayal of trust and abuse of power
- Damage to the good priests and religious
- Celibacy
- Failure of some priests and bishops to resign. Cardinal Brady was mentioned by name in this context. One speaker, however, set Cardinal Brady's position in the context of the prevailing authoritarian culture in Irish society at the time – in families, in employment and in the Church there was blind obedience and deference to authority
- Failure to follow Archbishop Martin's lead
- Bureaucratic and institutional response to abuse claims was lacking in human compassion
- Disappointment with Pope's response
- Arrogance of bishops
- Injustice of not according a presumption of innocence to priests and bishops involved in abuse claims
- One speaker suggested that paedophilia was more prevalent among Irish priests or priests of Irish descent internationally

2. *Elements that made people angry*

- Inadequate response and cover up by Pope, bishops and priests
- Response driven by a concern for the protection of the institutional Church and clerical office holders rather than Christian Gospel values
- Failure to listen to or believe victims
- The culture of clerical secrecy in the Church. One speaker recalled a case during his own schooldays in Blackrock College when the complainants were sworn to secrecy by Archbishop McQuaid
- Hiding behind canon law and unwillingness to involve civil authorities i.e., An Garda Síochána
- The belief that the Pope and the Vatican know more than they are admitting. Allegations against Pope in Munich damage his credibility
- Preferment given to guilty bishops e.g. Cardinal Law
- Damage to good priests and religious
- The length of time taken to properly address the issue
- The absence of a proper structured role for the laity, men and women, in the governance of the Church at all levels
- The manner in which Church authority was exercised through fear and with an unbalanced emphasis on sin, especially sexual sin, was seen as a contributory factor to the whole problem
- Lack of a face to face meeting with victims by Pope or Nuncio
- Moving of abusing priests to other parishes without informing parishioners of their abuse history
- Hypocrisy and negativity of media coverage (although credit was given to the media for exposing the scandal)
- Exploitation of situation by groups opposed to Church teaching on sexual morality

3. *Elements which give people reason to hope for the future of the Church*

- Our parish and priests and the many good priests
- Archbishop Martin
- Christ's promise to his Church that he will be with it till the end of time
- The heightened awareness of abuse makes it more difficult for a similar scandal to happen again
- The greater involvement of women in the Church
- The Holy Spirit
- Now that victims have a voice there is greater hope for healing
- New Convention on protection of children
- The presence of some young people at the meeting
- The meeting itself is a sign of hope
- The strong personal faith of participants

List of points transcribed from flip chart sheets used at Parish Meeting

<i>What made people SAD?</i>	<i>What made people ANGRY?</i>	<i>What gave people reason for HOPE?</i>
Damage	Church leaders too old for job. Jesus was 30.	Our parish and priests
Victims	Institution put before Jesus and Gospel values	Build a closer relationship with fellow Christians
Priesthood tainted	Why did this happen? Something wrong with the system.	Diarmuid Martin
Celibacy	Emphasis on sins of the flesh	Greater role for women in Church (inc. Ordination)
Loss of young people in Church	Lack of response for so long (from anybody)	Strong laity involvement
Only four young people present at meeting	Pope's response	Return to Bible Study
Parent of a victim in our group. Sad that no one listened in Church or Garda	Brady should go	Heightened awareness – don't let it happen again
The permanent harm done to innocent Children	Exploitation of situation by groups opposed to Church's teaching on sexual morality	The fact of disclosure now should make it more difficult for a repeat of abuse and cover up
Betrayal of trust of children and families	Lack of support to victims and their families	Now that victims have a voice there is greater hope for healing

Sad for good men and women lay and clerical who have been damaged	Guilt laid on victims by their abusers	New UN Convention on children's protection and rights
They just don't get it!	Abuse of power	The fact that Christ promised his Church that he will be with it till the end of time
How to bring up children in the Church in the middle of	Inadequate response and cover up	Archbishop Martin's appointment
all this. Young people find the Church less credible		
Very sad for all the good priests	Why has it taken so long?	The good priests we have
Taken so long for release of information – getting trapped between civil and canon law	Why is the “institution and sanctity” of the Church put before little children when God said “Harm not a hair on their head”	The role of laity
When Archbishop Martin asked for openness and transparency very sad that other bishops resisted him	Church still operating in a parallel universe. Canon law superior to civil law.	Caring of young people for the disadvantaged
That any human being could do what they did to another human being, particularly children, and abuse their position of power in doing so	Church law diluted over past years – as a result of which right and wrong blurred in minds of young people.	The power of the Holy Spirit
Very sad because it is so widespread	Mad at the bishops that were involved in cover up.	Some bishops resigned
Very sad that Archbishop Martin has been criticised by priests and bishops	No mention in Pope's letter of the Vatican's involvement	Women to have more influence

Response of Church has been bureaucratic instead of human	More sad than mad	Clergy who speak out
Very sad for victims	The cover up from the top	Retirement age for Pope and Bishops
Let down	Cover up damages reputation of good priests	Greater role for women
The victims were unheard	Lack of connectedness with reality by hierarchy	Processes such as this which focus on core Christian values
		and generate great energy.
Somebody let it happen	Change of leadership is required	Inspiration from survivors
The secrecy	Hypocrisy – double standards	The fact that it has all come out in the open at last
Effects for rest of life	The arrogance of Rome	The encouragement, understanding and sincerity of Fr Murney and Fr Aidan and many other priests in other parishes
Loss of trust in the long term.	Why it took so long to deal with	We hope we will have an open Church – open to dialogue from we the people who are the Church
Lack of belief in what was being said	Another excuse for young adults/teenagers to stay away from Church	To have a spiritually renewed Church really living the Gospel with laity taking their place at policy and decision making level
Fear of authority	The fact that educated priests and bishops in authority chose to ignore the damage being done to young children	Coming here tonight a sign of hope

For the Catholic Church	Cover up and refusal to act	Simple goodness of people
Cannot give back their childhood	That we as a society were so accepting	Destruction of pride and too much power
Victims lives destroyed	Problem known for a long time and not addressed	A new thing happening
Loss of respect for senior leaders in Church	Archbishop Martin got little support from his priests and auxiliary bishops	The Holy Spirit is alive and well
Sad for young priests and good priests	Mad at the attempts to cover up	Me and God
Pope's response not strong enough	Dysfunctional leadership	Good Clergy
Cardinal Brady should go	Lack of communication with Vatican through Papal Nuncio	Hell will not prevail
Cover up	Silence of Vatican until now	Openness at last. Thanks for Fr Murney
Q? Extend to other dioceses	Hypocrisy of the hierarchy to listen and act	Diarmuid Martin and good clerics
We have all lost some of our right to the innocence of children	Browbeaten into "The Church is always right"(fear instilled in us all)	Younger clergy will not be so submissive and they will be prepared to speak out
Bad example to young	Inadequate reaction from the Vatican	The whole event may be a catalyst for change
Abuse of trust	Pope not without sin. (His actions as a bishop)	People will be much more proactive
Pain of survivors	Reluctance on the part of the Church to give the laity, men and women, their rightful place in the Church	We cannot have hope until we know the full truth i.e., full investigation into every priest in Ireland
Symptom of corruption	Mad at trust in authority	Cannot have renewal without truth

Sad for good religious/clergy	Hypocrisy of media	We feel we are going through a cleansing period, hopefully a new Church will emerge with youth at the helm, having openness and transparency and without fear
Damage to stature of Church	They still have not learned the problem that it was the	Voices of the people are now being heard in this case but
	Church that are responsible	lack of structure
Sad at our naivety	Mad at the inadequacy of the apology from the Pope	That there are still so many good priests
To have destroyed even one child	Mad at the disunity of the bishops	Glad we have Archbishop Martin
Hysteria – Church going too far in appeasing those who are attacking it – injustice of Church’s policy of considering priests accused of child abuse guilty till proven innocent	Angry at all the clergy being tarred with the same brush	Less emphasis on sin and more emphasis on positivity
Arrogance of the bishops e.g., dressing up in Rome a measure of our leaders	Angry at bishops not resigning for the common good of the Church.	Poison out in the open thanks to the media
Church should come clear, i.e., Vatican was very aware of what was going on and did nothing. Why have a Papal Nuncio?	Angry at bishops ignoring the abuse situation	Prayer gives us hope
Some priests did not listen to the cries of the children (e.g., Ferns Report)	Angry at the negativity of the media – constant repetition	Awareness will prevent further suffering

Bishops "inacceptance" of what went on	Angry at the lack of female representation in the Church at all levels	The fact that there are many good priests and good parents
Sadness for the affected families	Angry that priests were not asked to leave ministry	Here tonight talking openly
Lack of response by ordinary people (twin towers, medical card)	Attempts to distance Rome from what happened	Diarmuid Martin
Sad that Murphy report did not find one case where canon law was invoked on behalf of victims	We were reluctant to believe when we initially heard. Young people more prepared to do so	Parish has organised this pastoral council
Sadness with the fear of sin that was injected into people by the Irish Catholic Church	Church reluctance to take responsibility	Faith = we are stronger
Sadness at the lack of sincerity of the clergy towards the abused victims	Face to face meeting with victims by Papal Nuncio or Pope	Informed laity
Saddened that the Catholic Church is in this mess	Cardinal should resign	Good priests
Sadness at the destruction of children's childhood	Drip, Drip, Drip self centred response of some bishops after Murphy Report	A few young people here tonight
Sad that clergy and parents did not believe the cry for help from the children	Moving abusing priests from parish to parish without informing	I am glad we have reached the stage of having a meeting like this
Angry that paedophiles were not asked to leave ministry	Allegations against Pope Benedict when Archbishop in Munich makes it difficult to see just resolution to this mess.	This Church and other religions have suffered persecutions before and will again

That children were abused and it could have been stopped	No clarity – going nowhere.	I am glad that I have my own personal faith with God
That people were constrained, silenced	Continual cover up –drawing teeth	Tonight is not the end but the beginning of a new era for the Church
Church’s reputation put before a child’s pain	“Suffer little children” not listening, inaction	I am glad that the Archbishop will get the feedback from this meeting
Damage to certainty of faith	Good priests tainted	
Lack of say in the Church	Constantly on the defensive	
Violence children endured	No action from the Vatican	
Silence and secrecy – cover up	Hypocrisy in our lives	
Sad for good priests	Society needed to be stronger, assertive	
Sorry for victims		
Innocence robbed, no help to heal, not listened to, not believed		
Betrayed, deflated		
Continuous cover up. False taking children to Church		
Rome has not got it		
Frustration		
Innocent children should be protected		
Priests not owning up – no honour		

Breakdown of society without these morals which we expect the hierarchy to have		
It feels like a falsehood. It is everything against what we have been brought up to believe in		