

Pope Francis accepts resignation of Bishop John McAreavey



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[Bishop John McAreavey](#)

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Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop John McAreavey as Bishop of Dromore amid concerns around his handling of a clerical child abuse scandal.

Dr McAreavey announced his decision to step down earlier this month, amid mounting pressure around his handling of paedophile priest Fr Malachy Finnegan.

At the time of his resignation Bishop McAreavey wrote to parishioners saying the decision to resign had been made "with a heavy heart".

- [Bishop John McAreavey sends resignation letter to Pope Francis](#)

Bishop Philip Boyce, the bishop emeritus of Raphoe, has been appointed as the Apostolic Administrator of Dromore - a position that puts him temporarily in charge of the diocese.

Allegations against Fr Finnegan came to light following a BBC Spotlight programme broadcast in February, which also looked at the response of the church.

Bishop McAreavey had known about allegations of child abuse against the disgraced cleric as far back as the mid-1990s, and conducted Fr Finnegan's funeral in 2002.

Responding to his resignation Archbishop Eamon Martin, the head of the Catholic church in Ireland, said: "During this Holy Week my prayers are with the people, religious and clergy of Dromore and in particular with those who have been abused, and with all who are suffering because of abuse."

"I wish to acknowledge Bishop McAreavey's nineteen years of service as a bishop. As president of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, I thank him for his generous contribution in a wide variety of roles as a member of the Bishops' Conference during that time."

"As the bishops stated following their Spring 2018 general meeting earlier this month, the Church can never become complacent concerning the safeguarding of children. The Church is committed to both the review process of dioceses undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church and to cooperation with any inquiry required by statutory bodies."


"My prayers also go to Bishop Philip Boyce as he begins his service as Apostolic Administrator of Dromore."

Prior to his resignation the parents of children in some primary schools in Co Down met with Bishop McAreavey, expressing their wish they did not want him taking part in Confirmation ceremonies.

Since the original BBC Spotlight documentary was broadcast a number of Fr Finnegan victims have come forward with accounts of abuse suffered.

Last week Sinn Fein MLA Conor Murphy said that while a pupil in the 1970s Fr Finnegan had physically abused him and attempted to sexually groom him.

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