

**Statement by Cardinal Seán Brady in response to the BBC ‘This World’  
Programme entitled ‘The Shame of the Catholic Church’**

*‘With others, I feel betrayed that those who had the authority in the Church to stop Brendan Smyth failed to act on the evidence I gave them. However, I also accept that I was part of an unhelpful culture of deference and silence in society, and the Church, which thankfully is now a thing of the past.’ – Cardinal Seán Brady*

Responding to the BBC ‘This World’ programme entitled ‘The Shame of the Catholic Church’, broadcast on 1 May 2012, Cardinal Seán Brady has issued the following statement:

On Tuesday 1 May 2012, the BBC ‘This World’ series broadcast a programme entitled ‘The Shame of the Catholic Church’ on the BBC Northern Ireland network. In the course of the programme a number of claims were made which overstate and seriously misrepresent my role in a Church Inquiry in 1975 into allegations against the Norbertine priest Fr Brendan Smyth.

In response to the programme I wish to draw attention to the following:

Six weeks before broadcast (15 March 2012) I drew the attention of the programme makers to a number of important facts related to the 1975 Church inquiry into Brendan Smyth, which the programme failed to report and which I now wish to restate for all other media who report on this matter:

- To suggest, as the programme does, that I led the investigation of the 1975 Church Inquiry into allegations against Brendan Smyth is seriously misleading and untrue. I was asked by my then Bishop (Bishop Francis McKiernan of the Diocese of Kilmore) to assist others who were more senior to me in this Inquiry process on a one-off basis only;
- The documentation of the interview with Brendan Boland, signed in his presence, clearly identifies me as the ‘notary’ or ‘note taker’. Any suggestion that I was other than a ‘notary’ in the process of recording evidence from Mr Boland, is false and misleading;
- I did not formulate the questions asked in the Inquiry process. I did not put these questions to Mr Boland. I simply recorded the answers that he gave;
- Acting promptly and with the specific purpose of corroborating the evidence provided by Mr Boland, thereby strengthening the case against Brendan Smyth, I subsequently interviewed one of the children identified by Mr Boland who lived in my home diocese of Kilmore. That I conducted this interview on my own is already on the public record. This provided prompt corroboration of the evidence given by Mr Boland;

- In 1975 no State or Church guidelines existed in the Republic of Ireland to assist those responding to an allegation of abuse against a minor. No training was given to priests, teachers, police officers or others who worked regularly with children about how to respond appropriately should such allegations be made;

- Even according to the State guidelines in place in the Republic of Ireland today, the person who first receives and records the details of an allegation of child abuse in an organisation that works with children is not the person who has responsibility within that organisation for reporting the matter to the civil authorities. This responsibility belongs to the 'Designated person' appointed by the organisation and trained to assume that role. In 1975, I would not have been the 'Designated Person' according to today's guidelines. As the *Children First* State guidelines explain (3.3.1): '*Every organisation, both public and private, that is providing services for children or that is in regular direct contact with children should (i) Identify a designated liaison person to act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. (ii) The designated liaison person is responsible for ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed, so that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the designated person in the HSE Children and Family Services or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the HSE, to An Garda Síochána.*';

- The commentary in the programme and much of the coverage of my role in this Inquiry gives the impression that I was the only person who knew of the allegations against Brendan Smyth at that time and that because of the office I hold in the Church today I somehow had the power to stop Brendan Smyth in 1975. I had absolutely no authority over Brendan Smyth. Even my Bishop had limited authority over him. The only people who had authority within the Church to stop Brendan Smyth from having contact with children were his Abbot in the Monastery in Kilnacrott and his Religious Superiors in the Norbertine Order. As Monsignor Charles Scicluna, Promoter of Justice at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith confirmed in an interview with RTÉ this morning, it was Brendan Smyth's superiors in the Norbertine Order who bear primary responsibility for failing to take the appropriate action when presented with the weight of evidence I had faithfully recorded and that Bishop McKiernan subsequently presented to them;

- The following statement from Monsignor Scicluna had been made to the BBC programme makers six weeks in advance of its broadcast but was not acknowledged by them in any way: '*It is clear to me that in 1975 Fr Brady, now Cardinal Brady, acted promptly and with determination to ensure the allegations being made by the children were believed and acted upon by his superiors. His actions were fully consistent with his duties under canon law. But the power to act effectively to remove Brendan Smyth from priestly ministry lay exclusively with the Abbot of Holy Trinity Abbey in Kilnacrott and his superiors in the Norbertine Order. This is where the sincere efforts of Bishop McKiernan and others like Fr Brady to prevent Brendan Smyth from perpetrating further harm were frustrated, with tragic consequences for the lives of so many children. I know that in his role as President of the Irish Bishops' Conference, Cardinal Brady has worked tirelessly with his fellow bishops to ensure such a situation could never occur again and that the civil authorities in Ireland are now promptly informed of allegations of abuse against children. We have all learned from the tragic experience of the Church in Ireland but also from the sincere efforts*

*of so many lay faithful, religious, priests and bishops to make the Church in Ireland an example of best practice in safeguarding children.’;*

· **In fact, I was shocked, appalled and outraged when I first discovered in the mid 1990’s that Brendan Smyth had gone on to abuse others. I assumed and trusted that when Bishop McKiernan brought the evidence to the Abbot of Kilnacrott that the Abbot would then have dealt decisively with Brendan Smyth and prevented him from abusing others. With others, I feel betrayed that those who had the authority in the Church to stop Brendan Smyth failed to act on the evidence I gave them. However, I also accept that I was part of an unhelpful culture of deference and silence in society, and the Church, which thankfully is now a thing of the past;**

· As to other children named in the evidence recorded during the Inquiry process, I had no further involvement in the Inquiry process once I handed over the evidence taken. I trusted that those with the authority to act in relation to Brendan Smyth would treat the evidence seriously and respond appropriately. I had no such authority to act and even by today’s guidance from the State I was not the person who had the role of bringing the allegations received to the attention of the civil authorities. I was also acutely aware that I had no authority in Church law in relation to Brendan Smyth or any other aspect of the Inquiry process;

· Today, Church policy in Ireland is to report allegations of abuse to the civil authorities. It recognises the Gardai and HSE as those with responsibility for investigating such allegations and that any Church investigation should not take place until the investigation by the civil authorities has been completed. I have fully supported this policy and have worked with my fellow Bishops and the leaders of Religious Congregations to put this policy in place;

· The programme made reference to a statement I made in the course of an RTE interview in which I suggested that if my failure to act on an allegation of abuse against a child led to further children being abused, that I would then consider resigning from my position. The programme failed to point out, however, that I gave this answer in response to a question specifically about someone in a position of ‘Management’, someone who was already a Bishop or Religious Superior with ultimate responsibility for managing a priest against whom an allegation has been made. In 1975, I was not a Bishop. I was not in that role. It was misleading of the BBC programme to apply my response to the RTE interview on a completely different situation to my role in the 1975 Inquiry.

It is my view that the ‘This World’ programme has set out to deliberately exaggerate and misrepresent my role in these events. The programme suggested that no response to their questions had been provided before the programme was completed, whereas in fact a comprehensive response had been provided to the programme six weeks in advance and only days after the ‘door-stepping’ interview with me in Limerick.

I deeply regret that those with the authority and responsibility to deal appropriately with Brendan Smyth failed to do so, with tragic and painful consequences for those children he so cruelly abused. I also deeply regret that no guidelines from the State or the Church were available to guide the sincere and serious effort made to respond to

the allegations made by the two boys interviewed in the Inquiry process. With many others who worked regularly with children in 1975, I regret that our understanding of the full impact of abuse on the lives of children as well as the pathology and on-going risk posed by a determined paedophile was so inadequate. It is important to acknowledge that today both the Church and the State have proper and robust procedures in place to respond to allegations of abuse against children. I fully support these new procedures which include the obligation to report such allegations promptly to the civil authorities. I have worked with others in the Church to put these new procedures in place and I look forward to continuing that vital work in the years ahead.