

ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

The Inquiry has identified approximately 100 allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse that were made between 1966 and 2005 against 21 priests⁵² operating under the aegis of the Diocese of Ferns. It is no part of the function of the Inquiry to form any view as to whether those complaints or allegations are, or any one of them is, well founded. The primary task of the Inquiry is to identify the response by the Church and public authorities to such complaints whether they are true or false.

The material contained in this Chapter is, therefore, a summary of the many allegations brought to the attention of the Inquiry. The Inquiry emphasises that the contents of this chapter consist of allegations or complaints substantially in the terms of the history provided directly or indirectly by the complainants. With the exception of the two priests who pleaded guilty to certain charges brought against them and to certain specific and limited admissions referred to in Chapter 5, all of those allegations and complaints are and were vehemently denied by all of the priests living at the time when the allegations were made against them. The priests who were dead at the time when the allegations were made did not have the opportunity to refute such allegations. Again, it must not be assumed that the Church or lay authorities accept that the allegations set out in this Chapter were made to them at all or were made in the terms recorded in this Chapter save to the extent that it is expressly so admitted elsewhere in the Report. The failure to repeat the phrase "it is alleged" throughout every paragraph of this Chapter must not be taken as indicating that the Inquiry has accepted that the allegations or complaints are, or any of them is, true.

It must also be noted that although the allegations of abuse outlined hereunder refer to a period which spans over thirty years, only a handful of these allegations were disclosed to the Diocese of Ferns or to the Civil authorities prior to 1990.

To preserve the anonymity of the complainants each of them has been ascribed and identified by a fictitious Christian name. So far as practicable, a comparable protection has been extended to priests against whom allegations or complaints have been made by ascribing a fictitious surname from a letter of the Greek alphabet to each of these priests.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to exercise this discretion effectively in relation to priests who hold or held unique or distinguished positions which were material to the allegations made against them or to priests who were convicted of an offence related to child sexual abuse or to priests who were or are prominent in the public domain as a result of media focus on allegations or complaints that surround them.

Criminal proceedings were instituted by the DPP against Fr Donal Collins in respect of 4 of the complaints made against him and against Fr James Doyle in respect of one complaint against him. Both of those proceedings resulted in convictions of the accused. Criminal proceedings were likewise instituted against Fr Sean Fortune in

⁵² The priests dealt with in the Appendix hereto are not included in this number.

respect of a total of 66 charges of sexual abuse. Those charges were struck out following the suicide of Fr Fortune.

Six other priests against whom allegations or complaints were made were deceased at the time of making the complaint and three priests have since died. In respect of complaints against four priests, the DPP, decided not to institute proceedings on evidence presented thus far. In a further two cases notified to Gardai, a file containing a statement of complaint was not passed to the DPP. In the remaining three cases known to Gardai, the complainant did not make a formal complaint to Gardai and no prosecution could therefore occur.

Criminal convictions have arisen in respect of the following complainants; Dylan, Darren, Conor, Rory and Adam. No criminal conviction occurred in respect of any other complaint referred to in this Chapter.

A number of allegations of abuse by priests in the Diocese have been the subject of civil proceedings which were settled either by the Diocese or the priest concerned.

Some priests against whom an allegation has been made have been the subject of either a private or public apology by Bishop Eamonn Walsh, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Ferns since April 2002, and this has been identified by the Inquiry where this has occurred.

The Inquiry has retained, as far as is practicable, the vocabulary and terms in which the complaints were recorded.

4.1 FR DONAL COLLINS

4.1.1 SAM

Sam alleged the following:

Sam was a student in St Peter's during the mid to late 1960s. During his intermediate exam year, Fr Collins abused him for the first time in Fr Collins's room. Fr Collins invited Sam to his room on the pretext of photographing him. A second incident happened in the dormitory when Fr Collins masturbated Sam while Sam was in bed. Fr Collins abused Sam on a total of six occasions. Fr Collins has denied masturbating Sam as alleged.

Sam made a complaint to the Diocese by letter dated 15 April 2002 and met with Bishop Walsh later that year. The Diocese notified the South Eastern Health Board and the Chief Superintendent of Wexford. The DPP, however, directed that the criminal prosecution should not proceed. Sam subsequently wrote to Bishop Walsh seeking compensation.

4.1.2 UNIDENTIFIED COMPLAINANTS 1966

The Inquiry has heard from clerical witnesses who allege the following:

In 1966, Fr Patrick Curtis and Fr Tom Sherwood, both senior teachers at St Peter's College, contacted the bishop's secretary, in relation to complaints of child sex abuse against Fr Collins. The abuse occurred when Fr Collins visited "the attic" dormitory at night to perform examinations of an intimate nature involving the measurement of the length of boys' penises on the pretext of ascertaining whether or not they were growing normally. The Inquiry was told that approximately 20 boys were involved. Fr Collins has disputed the detail of this account of the alleged abuse.

The complaints were reported to Bishop Herlihy who transferred Fr Collins to pastoral ministry at Kentish Town in London where he remained until 1968. Fr Collins returned to St Peter's College in 1968. This is covered in further detail at Chapter Five.

4.1.3 NOEL AND VICTOR

Noel alleged the following:

In April 1989, Bishop Comiskey received a complaint of child sexual abuse against Fr Collins. This was the first complaint made directly to Bishop Comiskey in relation to this priest. The complainant did not identify himself but Bishop Comiskey wrote to Fr Collins seeking his response.

A further complaint was made to Bishop Comiskey in May 1989 by the parent of a former pupil of St Peter's College who said that Fr Collins had been abusing boys in the college. This complainant was the mother of the unidentified complainant above who was subsequently identified as Noel.

In 1991, Bishop Comiskey met with Noel who complained to the Bishop of sexual abuse perpetrated against him and another student named Victor by Fr Collins, when he, Noel, was approximately 16 years old, during the early 1970s at St Peter's College. According to Noel, the students at St Peter's dreaded the prospect of being called to Fr Collins's room. On one occasion, Fr Collins placed his hands on Noel's genitals continuously rubbing him. Noel also mentioned a widely known incident involving Victor who returned to the dormitory very late one evening in a drunken state, shouting that Fr Collins had attacked him. Victor had no memory of any sexual abuse taking place but was fearful that something might have happened as Fr Collins had given Victor alcohol. Fr Collins has particularly denied that sexual abuse ever occurred with Victor and had reassured him on that point many years later.

4.1.4 RORY

Rory alleged the following:

Rory attended St Peter's College as a boarder during the 1970s. He states that he was abused by Fr Collins who was his science teacher, from second year onwards. He complained that after class one day Fr Collins asked him if he was worried about anything and specifically asked if he was developing normally. This placed a doubt in Rory's mind as to the normality of his development, a doubt which Fr Collins exploited, eventually persuading Rory to allow him to examine him. Fr Collins masturbated the boy four to six times a year for four years.

Rory reported to Bishop Comiskey in 1991 that he had been sexually abused by Fr Collins while a student at St Peter's College. He was offered and received counselling expenses from the Diocese.

In December 1994, he made a formal complaint to An Garda Síochána. He subsequently instituted High Court proceedings against Fr Collins, the Trustees of St Peter's College and the bishop. This civil case settled with compensation being paid to Rory in January, 2000.

Rory met with Bishop Walsh in July 2003 and the bishop recommended that Rory make contact with Sister Helen O'Riordan, diocesan support person.

4.1.5 CONOR

Conor alleged the following:

Fr Collins first abused Conor during his fourth year at St. Peter's College in the early 1970s. He stated that he was invited by Fr Collins to his room to discuss the Young Scientist project. Fr Collins changed the subject to Conor's maturity, both mental and physical. He put his hand on Conor's private parts and started touching him. Two more incidents are alleged to have happened over the following year. After the third incident, Conor was not in that position with Fr Collins again and nothing further happened. Conor first made a complaint in relation to this abuse to An Garda Síochána in 1995.

4.1.6 DYLAN

Dylan alleged the following:

Dylan first made a statement to the Gardai in 1995 alleging abuse by Fr Collins during the 1970s whilst he was pupil of St Peter's College. Fr Collins regularly invited Dylan to his room for discussions. On one occasion the discussion turned towards Dylan's relationship with girls, adolescence and masturbation. Fr Collins put his hand on the zip of Dylan's trousers and said that boys of Dylan's age had doubts about whether they were developing properly or not, and if he could look at Dylan's penis he would be able to confirm that he was developing correctly.

After continuous objections from Dylan, Fr Collins stopped attempting to abuse him.

4.1.7 EDMUND

Edmund alleged the following:

Edmund made a statement to An Garda Síochána in 1995 in relation to abuse suffered when he attended St Peter's College as a day student during the 1970s where he had Fr Collins as his science and physics teacher. He was involved in a project for the Young Scientist of the Year exhibition. He was brought to Fr Collins's room to discuss the project. On a number of occasions Fr Collins forced Edmund to engage in mutual masturbation and oral sex. On one occasion Edmund alleges, Fr Collins attempted anal sex with him.

Civil proceedings were instituted by Edmund against Fr Collins, St Peter's College and the Bishop of Ferns in 1999. Edmund met with Bishop Walsh in 2002 and spoke of how the abuse had affected him. The Bishop apologised for the abuse, acknowledging that the apology was late in the day. Edmund's civil case was eventually settled with payment of compensation. Edmund was one of many complainants who said to this Inquiry that they found the civil process very difficult.

4.1.8 DEREK

Derek alleged the following:

Derek made a statement to An Garda Síochána in 1995 in relation to abuse suffered while he was a student at St Peter's College in the 1970s. On a number of occasions in his second and third year, Fr Collins asked him to drop his trousers so he could inspect his genitals and see how he was developing. He also remembers Fr Collins offering to show him his own genitals but Derek never encouraged him to do so. On one occasion while Derek was preparing a project in third year for the Young Scientist exhibition, Fr Collins put his hand down Derek's underpants and asked him if this turned him on. Fr Collins later told him that what happened between them was private, that nobody else would understand and therefore nobody should be told.

Derek wrote to a priest of the Diocese in 2002 in relation to this abuse and the abuse a friend had suffered at the hands of Fr Collins in St Peter's College. This letter was immediately passed on to Bishop Walsh. Although Derek was affected by the abuse he suffered, he has stated to the inquiry that he is now in a happy marriage with a good family life, career and fulfilling participation in the Catholic Church. Derek met with Bishop Walsh in 2002 and expressed some ideas on moving forward as a Church. He indicated that he did not feel the need for further counselling. Derek was one of the few abuse victims who still practiced his Catholic faith. For most victims who spoke with this Inquiry, the abuse had the affect of alienating them from the Catholic Church and from organised religion in general.

4.1.9 DARREN

Darren alleged the following:

Darren first made a statement to An Garda Síochána in 1996. Fr Collins admitted to having sexually abused Darren during the 1980s whilst he was a boarding school pupil at St Peter's College. Darren stated that while he was in second year at study one night, Fr Collins told him to collect copy books and bring them to his room at the college. In the room, Fr Collins sat down beside him on the couch and spoke about Darren's height and weight. He told Darren to take off his shirt and jumper and, using a measuring tape, measured his chest and waist and the inside of his legs. Fr Collins then unzipped his trousers and measured his penis with the measuring tape. Fr Collins fondled Darren's testicles and penis while talking to Darren about the size of his penis and what size it could be. The abuse continued on a regular basis throughout Darren's remaining period at St Peter's College. Fr Collins performed oral sex on him, gave him alcohol and showed him two pornographic films.

Darren wrote to the diocese in September 1995 but did not receive a written reply to his initial letter, so he wrote again. The diocesan secretary replied seeking the identity of the priest and the nature and circumstances of the abuse. This letter was not received by Darren, owing to a change of address.

The diocesan secretary telephoned the Director of Community Care of the SEHB to arrange a meeting. Monsignor Breen, vicar general, provided the Director of Community Care with a copy of the letter from Darren together with the response. The Director of Community Care undertook to pursue the matter with the Garda authorities.

The civil proceedings taken by Darren have now been settled.

4.1.10 RICHARD

Richard alleged the following:

Richard told the Inquiry that he was instructed to attend Fr Collins's room in relation to either the Legion of Mary or his swimming associations when he was first abused. He was touched and masturbated by Fr Collins on a number of occasions. Richard stated that Fr Collins usually offered him alcoholic drinks during such occurrences. Richard stated to the Inquiry that he was warned by a nurse of the college not to be alone with Fr Collins. Richard first reported the instances of abuse to An Garda Síochána in 1996.

4.1.11 UNIDENTIFIED COMPLAINANTS

Three unidentified complainants alleged the following:

The Inquiry has been made aware of three recent complaints made to Bishop Walsh in relation to instances of sexual abuse by Fr Collins while they were students at St Peter's College during the 1970s. The three complainants did not wish to make formal complaints or have the matter pursued with a Church or Garda investigation. One of these complaints has now been settled by the Diocese.

4.1.12 GEORGE

George alleged the following:

In early January 2004, the Diocese of Ferns received a letter from a firm of solicitors engaged by George which cited instances of sexual abuse by Fr Collins against George in the late 1980s and early 1990s when he was a student at St Peter's College. This is the only complaint identified by the Inquiry that concerns sexual abuse by Fr Collins after his appointment as Principal of the college. The letter also refers to instances of physical abuse by another priest at the college. George has instituted proceedings against the Diocese in respect of sexual abuse by Fr Collins.

4.2 FR JAMES DOYLE

4.2.1 MATTHEW

Matthew alleged the following:

The Inquiry has been told by a priest who served on the teaching staff of St Peter's Seminary from 1969, that some time in 1972-1973, whilst James Doyle was a student and still a junior member of the seminary, he returned to the College drunk and attempted to molest a student called Matthew. This staff member reported the matter to the Dean (now deceased), who was dismissive of the complaint. He then reported the matter to the President of the College now also deceased. On 5 February 1973, the President of the College wrote to James Doyle advising him that his ordination was being postponed. James Doyle was, however, approved for ordination one year later in 1974 by the newly appointed President of St Peter's College. One clerical witness to the Inquiry has stated that it was his belief that Bishop Donal Herlihy directly intervened to have James Doyle's ordination proceeded with although the Inquiry has seen no documentary evidence of such intervention. This ex-President of the college has told the Inquiry that he had no information about James Doyle at the time of his ordination that would have caused him to reconsider his decision to recommend it.

4.2.2 UNIDENTIFIABLE COMPLAINANTS

- (i) A priest of the Diocese informed the Inquiry that the sergeant of Gorey Garda station contacted him in December, 1979 and told him that Fr James Doyle had given a lift to a young soldier who was hitchhiking and propositioned him. The young man jumped out of the car and reported the incident to An Garda Síochána who pursued Fr Doyle to Wicklow, stopped him and questioned him. The sergeant (now deceased) told this diocesan priest the following day that he did not propose to pursue the matter any further or charge Fr Doyle but that he did want to reinforce the warning that the Gardai had given him the day before. He sought an assurance from the diocesan priest to whom he spoke that there would be no further incidents. Fr Doyle's agreement to receive medical treatment in Belfast satisfied the Gardai at the time.
- (ii) A second priest of the Diocese said to the Inquiry that he was told by a Garda Superintendent in or about 1980 that Fr Doyle had been on his way to Belfast when he picked up a hitchhiker near Gorey and attempted to abuse him sexually. The Superintendent told the Inquiry that he reported this matter as well as his knowledge of general rumour surrounding Fr Doyle to Bishop Herlihy at this time.
- (iii) Shortly after an incident involving Fr Doyle and a hitchhiker (1979/1980), the diocesan priest referred to at (ii) above, was approached by a local parishioner who told him that an altar boy had been sexually abused by Fr Doyle. This priest recalls seeing graffiti near the sacristan's home on the path to the church saying "James Doyle is bent". He questioned Fr Doyle and Fr Doyle's reply was that he was a little bit foolish but made no further comment. Although he interpreted this comment as an admission, the priest in question has stated to the Inquiry that he still does not know what Fr Doyle is alleged to have done. He reported both matters to Bishop Herlihy and recalled that Bishop Herlihy sent Fr Doyle to Dublin for treatment with a psychologist or psychiatrist.

4.2.3 ADAM

Adam alleged the following:

In the early 1990s, Fr Doyle sexually assaulted Adam who was 12 years of age at the time, during a visit to the boy's home. The incident arose when Fr Doyle went to the bathroom in the course of the evening. Adam's father heard his son scream "stop". He immediately went to the landing and saw Fr Doyle standing over Adam. The boy was crouched in the corner with his back to the wall and Fr Doyle had one hand on his crotch and the other on his buttocks. Adam explained to the Gardai how the priest pushed him into the corner and grabbed his private parts. The family contacted Fr Doyle's parish priest. Two months later the boy's father discussed the assault with Bishop Comiskey. The matter was reported to the Garda Síochána and Fr Doyle was charged and convicted of indecent assault.

Notwithstanding Bishop Comiskey's expeditious removal of Fr Doyle and his subsequent dealings with him following this complaint, as more particularly set out in Chapter Five of this Report, the Diocese did not meet or attempt to meet with this victim or his family in relation to this complaint. The consequences of this case were very serious for the family concerned.

4.2.4 BARRY

Barry alleged the following:

Barry complained of abuse by Fr James Doyle in 1981 when he was approximately 11 years of age. He told the Inquiry that he had found a watch at a local Wexford GAA pitch which he gave to Fr Doyle so that the owner could be found. While he was handing over the watch, Fr Doyle undid his own and Barry's clothing and whilst he did not remove any clothing, he did expose both Barry and himself. Fr Doyle touched Barry and told Barry to touch him. Fr Doyle promised Barry that if the owner of the watch was not found, he would see that the watch was given to Barry. Barry did not tell anybody in his family what had happened because he felt he would not be believed. He returned, with some misgivings, to collect the unclaimed watch and Fr Doyle tried again to impose himself on Barry although no actual physical assault took place. Barry only recently disclosed his abuse to a local doctor. He reported the abuse to An Garda Síochána in January 2003.

4.2.5. BARRY'S BROTHER

Barry also alleged the following in relation to his younger brother:

Barry believes that his younger brother, who did not contact the Inquiry, was also abused by Fr Doyle as an altar boy and that such abuse would have occurred for a longer period than Barry's abuse.

4.2.6 JEREMY

Jeremy alleged as follows:

Jeremy was a student in St Peter's boarding school whilst James Doyle was a senior pupil there and during his first few years as a seminarian. Jeremy was about four years James Doyle's junior. He recalled lying in his bed one evening when James Doyle came into his cubicle and started to fondle him. He was deeply disturbed by this but felt he could tell no-one. He said he had admired and respected James Doyle until then but this episode had destroyed that. He stated that James Doyle was not drunk at the time of the alleged incident.

4.3 FR ALPHA

4.3.1 EDWARD

Edward alleged the following:

Edward was an altar boy in a parish in Wexford in the mid 1970s when Fr Alpha was appointed curate there. He made a statement to Garda Tom Murphy in November 1995, outlining sexual abuse by Fr Alpha from the summer of 1974 when he was 15 years of age. He stated that Fr Alpha asked him to attend his house to help with parish work, especially when Fr Alpha was on duty. On the pretext of trying on swimming trunks, Fr Alpha encouraged Edward to take off all of his clothes. Eventually Fr Alpha lay on top of him and, as they both lay on the bed naked, masturbation took place. Edward stated that he felt sorry for Fr Alpha and let him lie on top of him on his bed for approximately 15 or 20 minutes. Edward visited Fr Alpha's room in his house at least three times a week. The abuse, as alleged above, happened over a four or five year period mostly in the evening time. After some time Edward began to realise that this was wrong. He stated that Fr Alpha brought him on holidays on three occasions and on each holiday he was sexually abused by him. In the spring of 1980 Fr Alpha's advances towards him ceased.

In 1995 Edward made a statement to the Gardai. Through the Gardai he also made contact with the Diocesan Delegate, Fr Cosgrave. On 31 October 1997, Bishop Comiskey wrote to Edward indicating a willingness to meet him and confirming that a church investigation was still ongoing. They met in November 1997.

Fr Alpha vehemently denied any improper behaviour between himself and Edward. He confirmed that they had been on holidays with his, Fr Alpha's, brothers, but was quite adamant that nothing untoward occurred. He also said that he first became acquainted with Edward in May 1977 when Edward was already aged 18 years. He affirmed that he never had any sexual relationship with Edward either as a boy or an adult.

In May 1997 and again in June 2003 following further allegations, a decision was taken by the DPP not to proceed with a criminal charge against Fr Alpha and he remained in ministry until he stepped aside in 2002 at the request of the Apostolic Administrator.

4.3.2 GAVIN

Gavin alleged the following:

Gavin stated to the Inquiry that he was first abused by Fr Alpha in the mid 1970s when he was between seven and eight years of age and acted as an altar server for him. Gavin alleged in detail the nature of this abuse for the first time in his fourth written statement to the Gardai in September 2002. Gavin claims that he was raped by Fr Alpha beside a pond in a field near his home. He claims he blocked out this memory for years and only recovered it after years of therapy. He stated that Fr Alpha continued to abuse him throughout his teenage years.

After he completed his leaving certificate, Gavin entered the seminary in St Peter's. While he was there, Gavin met with the Spiritual Director of the Seminary. Gavin told the Inquiry that he believed he had discussed the abuse with the Spiritual Director on many occasions. Gavin has stated that the Spiritual Director suggested to him that he, Gavin, should ring Fr Alpha and arrange to meet him at St Peter's College. Gavin advised the Inquiry that Fr Alpha did drive to St Peter's on that evening and spoke to Gavin but not to the Spiritual Director. Gavin alleged that Fr Alpha refused Gavin's request to stay away from him and his family.

The Spiritual Director of St Peter's at that time attended the Inquiry and explained that in his capacity as Spiritual Director, students or seminarians came to him from time to time to speak to him. The meeting might involve the Spiritual Director hearing the Confession of the seminarian but it was his belief and contention that all matters discussed by seminarians with him in his capacity as Spiritual Director came under the seal of Confession and that they were absolutely confidential and private. The Spiritual Director could and did give certain evidence in relation to other matters but would not and did not discuss in any way the information, if any, given to him by Gavin. The Inquiry accepted that discussions between seminarians and their Spiritual Director were covered by sacerdotal privilege but that Gavin was free under Civil law to give whatever evidence he thought fit in relation thereto.

Gavin left St Peter's College and married. The President of St Peter's College at that time has stated to the Inquiry that he was unaware of Gavin's alleged sexual abuse by Fr Alpha at the time of his leaving St Peter's. Gavin's marriage subsequently broke up. He claims that the cause of this break-up was related to his renewed sexual contact with Fr Alpha in the years between 1990 and 1996.

Gavin made an initial complaint to the Gardai in September 1996. He met with Bishop Comiskey in March 1997. Gavin told the Inquiry that he told Bishop Comiskey that he was abused by Fr Alpha but did not go into the details as he was not encouraged to do so by the demeanour of the Bishop and by the fact that Bishop Comiskey had revealed to him details of the identity of another complainant, which concerned him.

Gavin made a third statement to An Garda Síochána in May 1997, in relation to a counter-complaint made by Fr Alpha that Gavin had abused him. Gavin conceded that he did make an approach to Fr Alpha but claimed that this was because of his confused sexuality which resulted from the child abuse perpetrated by Fr Alpha. These complaints were referred to the DPP but not proceeded with by him.

4.3.3 ERIC

Eric alleged the following:

In June 1993, when Eric was 15, having become friendly with Fr Alpha he was in the sitting room of the parochial house with him discussing problems he was having at home. He alleges that he was upset and Fr Alpha became tearful and knelt down in front of him, putting his hand up and down his legs, brushing across the crotch area of Eric's trousers. These activities lasted for about half an hour during which time Eric felt confused and froze. As Eric left, Fr Alpha gave him a

hug and kissed him on the lips. Eric went home but did not disclose the abuse to anybody. Eric alleged that similar incidents occurred on a weekly basis thereafter, until some time in July 1993 when Fr Alpha told Eric that he, Eric, had problems sexually and that Fr Alpha wanted to help him. After initially resisting Fr Alpha, Eric submitted. In August 1993, it is alleged that Fr Alpha forced Eric to perform oral sex on him. Acts of a sexual nature are alleged to have continued on a regular basis in the parochial house until June 1994 when, Eric claims, Fr Alpha and another man raped him. On the following day, Eric went to the local forest with the intention of hanging himself.

In October 1995, Eric disclosed his sexual abuse by Fr Alpha to two doctors who were treating him in hospital and spoke to the Sister in charge of the ward in January or February 1996. In February 1996, the SEHB informed the Gardai. Eric then made a statement to the Gardai.

Eric met with Bishop Comiskey on 3 January 1997. In breach of what Eric believed to be an undertaking of confidentiality, a statement given by him to the diocese outlining the abuse he had suffered was passed on by a priest of the diocese to Fr Alpha and he then revealed it to Eric's parents. This caused a row that resulted in his parents not speaking to Eric for two years. The Bishop apologised for that breach. A series of correspondence and meetings ensued between Eric and Bishop Comiskey throughout the next two years.

In July 1997, a further and more detailed statement of abuse was provided by Eric whereupon Bishop Comiskey strongly advised him to report to the Gardai who would be able to investigate the allegations properly and in a way that the Diocese could not do.

Eric maintained regular correspondence with the Diocese until Bishop Comiskey's resignation after which Eric received no further communication.

The DPP decided not to prosecute in this case on the evidence presented to him.

Eric stated that he was embarrassed by an approach made to him by Bishop Eamonn Walsh outside a church at a Confirmation ceremony in 2003, during which the Bishop discussed the DPP's decision not to prosecute Fr Alpha. Bishop Walsh has stated to this Inquiry that when he met Eric by chance on this occasion, he was conscious that the decision not to prosecute would have been a disappointment to him. He felt that it would have been remiss of him not to acknowledge the situation. Bishop Walsh spoke to Eric in private and used the opportunity to invite Eric to meet with him to discuss the matter fully. This meeting took place a short time later.

Fr Alpha denies all of the allegations outlined above.

4.4 FR JAMES GRENNAN (Deceased)

In 1988, ten girls alleged that they had been sexually molested by Fr James Grennan whilst he heard their Confessions on the altar in the parish church of Monageer. These girls were aged around 12 or 13 at the time and they made the complaint to the principal of Monageer national school, Mr Pat Higgins. Mr Higgins contacted the South Eastern Health Board, who sent a social worker, to speak with the girls. The Health Board then arranged for Dr Geraldine Nolan, Director of the newly established Validation Unit in Waterford, to interview the girls. On 4 May 1988 she interviewed 7 of the 10 girls who made the allegations. The other 3 girls had been refused permission by their parents to attend Dr Nolan.

Dr Nolan provided a composite report on all 7 girls who were interviewed individually. The substance of each complaint was similar and it is therefore useful to recite certain aspects of Dr Nolan's report hereunder:

"Confession was a major time that the girls felt unhappy about. This was held on the altar with Fr Grennan sitting on a chair and the children kneeling on red cushions at his feet. The rest of the class remained in their seats and were told to keep their eyes closed because they were in a house of God and to show respect. They were told that if their eyes were closed their prayers would go straight to God. If they opened their eyes while the Confession was occurring Fr Grennan would chastise them. At Confession Fr Grennan would grasp the child's hands in his hands and pull them towards his private parts. The zip would be described as half down and there was never any allegation of his putting their hands inside of the unzipped area. He would pull the child close and rub his face and mouth around their jaw while asking them questions about their families etc. He was also described as putting his hands under their skirts and fondling their legs to mid-thigh level only.

Other occasions when the girls were likely to be alone with Fr Grennan were in the vestry especially if they were preparing for lessons etc. for readings. The main allegations there were of fondling through their clothes of the upper body. He was alleged to have touched inside their T shirts while ostensibly examining the pattern or wording etc. on the T- shirt. Some of the children also described either in his own house in his sitting room or at their house or a relative's house, sitting on his knee and being fondled but in the presence of other people it was made to look like tickling.

One girl also described a rather severe slap on her ear in the class when she said she would tell her parents about it. He offered his apologies and asked her not to tell. He said he would pray for her.

... Fr Grennan's actions in many cases have been going on for two or three years and in some cases over the past school year. They are not allegations that would be made up for any malicious intent and the girls described much the same activity in different ways."

The Inquiry has met with the following witnesses.

4.4.1 BRIDGET

Bridget alleged the following:

Bridget was one of the group of ten girls who alleged sexual abuse by Fr Grennan during Confession in Monageer church in April 1988. She told the Inquiry that sexual abuse had taken place on the altar in the church at Monageer during Confession, in the parochial house and in the vestry. She said that while preparing for Confirmation, the whole class was present in the church, but at certain times she had to collect magazines and other items from the priest which would result in her being on her own with him. She stated that while alone on these occasions Fr Grennan inappropriately touched her. She was one of the girls who, with her family, walked out of the Confirmation ceremony in Monageer.

4.4.2 EIMEAR

Eimear alleged the following:

Eimear was also one of the 10 girls who alleged sexual abuse by Fr Grennan during Confession at Monageer church in April 1988. She told the Inquiry that Fr Grennan had put "the fear of God" in the Confirmation class in relation to their knowledge of catechism. Fr Grennan constantly kept a watch on all the children while he was on the altar and hearing Confession from one of them. She said that Fr Grennan would pull her hands in close to him so that she touched his genital area. She said Fr Grennan's fly was half open during these encounters. He would then get close to her ear and her face and his face would touch her face and he would begin licking her jaw and licking her ear. She said this happened on numerous occasions. She informed the Inquiry that she was not contacted by the South Eastern Health Board after 1988 until a Health Board official called to her house requesting her consent to the handing over of her files to Mr George Birmingham in 2002. She confirmed that no counselling was offered at any time after 1988.

4.4.3 OLIVIA

Olivia alleged the following:

Olivia was also one of the 10 girls who alleged sexual abuse by Fr Grennan during Confession at Monageer church in April 1988. She told the Inquiry that her class felt very threatened by Fr Grennan and afraid of him. She was personally petrified of him and uneasy at his untidy appearance and in particular his dirty and scruffy dress and odour of alcohol and cigarettes. She stated that he would place her hands in his hands whilst she was up on the altar kneeling in front of him and he would put her hands onto his private parts and lick her jaw and stick his tongue into her ear whilst asking her about a particular commandment. This happened on a number of times and on a regular basis.

4.4.4 ITA'S PARENTS

Ita's parents alleged the following:

Ita was one of the group of 10 girls who alleged that they were sexually abused by Fr Grennan during Confession in Monageer church in April 1988. She made a statement to Garda Behan at the time of the initial investigation and attended Dr Geraldine Nolan for assessment. Both Ita and her parents had been assured by the Health Board that Fr Grennan would not be present at the Confirmation ceremony due to take place the following June. Other families whose children had complained about Fr Grennan had been given similar assurances. In fact, Fr Grennan was at the ceremony and appeared prominently at Bishop Comiskey's side from the start. Ita and her family walked out of the church in protest. The family felt upset at how the situation had been handled. Their suffering was exacerbated some years later when their child died tragically in an accident and Fr Grennan insisted on conducting the funeral service against the wishes of the family.

Ita instituted civil proceedings against Bishop Comiskey, the Minister for Justice, Ireland and the Attorney General which have now settled.

4.4.5 FERGUS

Fergus alleged the following:

Fergus was an altar boy who served with Fr Grennan for a period of up to eight months prior to his death. He took an overdose of medication before Fr Grennan's funeral in order to avoid having to attend it. As a result of this suicide attempt, he received counselling. On 30 May 1994, Fergus alleged to his mother, and subsequently to a counsellor, that he had been sexually abused by Fr Grennan soon after commencing his service as altar boy.

Both Fergus and his therapist wrote to Bishop Comiskey in relation to the allegations on 21 June 1994. This letter was passed to Bishop Comiskey via Fr Paul Andrews SJ, a well known psychologist. Fergus told the Inquiry that he believes that if Bishop Comiskey "*had done his job*" in relation to the 1988 complaints, the abuse which happened to him would not have occurred.

Fergus did not provide details of the nature or extent of the abuse to the Inquiry although he did attend for an oral hearing during which he discussed the response of the Diocese to his allegation.

4.4.6 DEBORAH

Deborah alleged the following:

Deborah spoke of her abuse by Fr Grennan to Mr George Birmingham and to her solicitor. She also met with Bishop Walsh in May 2002. Bishop Walsh gave her his phone number inviting her to contact him should the need arise. She spoke with Bishop Walsh on three subsequent occasions. The abuse is alleged to have started when she was five years of age in the mid 1970s. She alleged that the abuse

continued for a number of years and that when she was seven years of age Fr Grennan tried to penetrate her.

Deborah's mother contacted the Inquiry and stated that although Fr Grennan was a regular visitor to their home, and on occasion stayed overnight, nothing improper occurred between Fr Grennan and her daughter. She said that Fr Grennan would sometimes sleep in Deborah's bed; if she was already asleep she would not move her, but she was quite certain that if anything had happened, Deborah would have told her.

Deborah stated to George Birmingham that she wrote to Bishop Comiskey in 1993 detailing in her letter what Fr Grennan did to her but she received no reply. She said that in 1995 she wrote another letter asking why she did not receive a reply to her earlier letter. Bishop Comiskey denied ever receiving any correspondence from Deborah. Deborah's mother recalls her writing a letter to Bishop Comiskey but did not know its contents and does not know if it was posted. There is no evidence of these letters on the diocesan files made available to the Inquiry.

Deborah had a troubled and unstable adolescence which continued into her twenties. She blamed this on the abuse she suffered from Fr Grennan. Deborah committed suicide in 2002, aged 31.

4.4.7 SHEILA

Sheila alleged the following:

In June 2002, Sheila met with Bishop Walsh to report a complaint of sexual abuse perpetrated by Fr Grennan on her as a child. Sheila was one of the original group of ten girls who alleged abuse by Fr Grennan in Monageer in 1988. No details of this abuse were recorded and the Inquiry has not met with this complainant. The Inquiry notes that Sheila pursued counselling paid for by the Diocese and met regularly with the Diocesan victim support person.

4.4.8 ANNA

Anna alleged as follows:

In 1981, Anna was 11 years old and residing at her grandmother's house when Fr Grennan visited and sat her on his knee. He began to rub his hands against her skin and in particular against her back and her breasts underneath her clothing. Anna did not make a complaint to the Diocese or Health Board at any time and only made a complaint to Gardai in July 2002.

4.5 FR SEAN FORTUNE (Deceased)

4.5.1 STEPHEN

Stephen alleged the following:

Stephen was a boarder in St Peter's in the 1970s and alleged sexual abuse by Sean Fortune who was a seminarian there at the time. Stephen was 13 years old when the abuse started. Inappropriate touching and sexually explicit conversations led to oral sex and masturbation and eventually, after 3 or 4 months, to full and violent rape. The first such rape occurred in a shower cubicle in St Peter's and subsequently five or six incidents occurred in a bedroom in the College. Sean Fortune made Stephen swear on a bible not to tell anyone and warned him that if he did, he would be expelled from St Peter's which would cause great hurt to his parents.

Close to the end of the school year, Stephen told the principal of St Peter's of the abuse. The school Principal reacted angrily to what Stephen said and refused to believe him, telling him that Sean Fortune was going to be a good priest and that if he persisted in saying those things about him, he would be thrown out of the college. Stephen dreaded going back to the college the following year. However, no further abuse occurred and he had no further contact with Sean Fortune and only minimal contact with the Principal. Stephen told the Inquiry that he continued to be affected by what had happened to him in his early days in school. He has now started counselling and is hopeful that that will help. Stephen contacted the Diocese in March 2003 and is pursuing a civil claim against Bishop Eamonn Walsh and the Diocese of Ferns.

4.5.2 MAURICE

Maurice alleged the following:

Maurice was a pupil in St Peter's secondary school whilst Sean Fortune was a seminarian. During nocturnal visits to the dormitory, Sean Fortune would masturbate himself whilst fondling Maurice. This happened three or four times. Maurice got to know Sean Fortune through his involvement with the Boy Scouts. As a result of what happened with Sean Fortune, Maurice engineered his own expulsion from St. Peter's. The effect of expulsion from a highly regarded boarding school on Maurice's life was significant.

4.5.3 DAVID

David alleged the following:

Whilst he was a Seminarian, Sean Fortune frequented the secondary school in St. Peter's because of his association with the boy scouts group in the school. David was a 17 year old student in St Peter's College and he went on a camping trip in early 1979 with the St Peter's College unit. David was rousing the patrols one morning. He opened a flap of a tent and found Sean Fortune lying on top of a scout and feeling his private parts. The boy in question told David that Fortune had abused many other boys as well. Some of the scouts wanted to report the incident to the President of the College at the time, but David asked them not to and they didn't.

David also reported that, on a trip to the Isle of Man in 1979, a scout leader told him that Sean Fortune had made advances towards him and that he believed that he made advances towards another leader as well. David reported a number of other incidents involving sexual advances and inappropriate behaviour by Fortune in a full report to the national headquarters of the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland in December 1979. He told the Inquiry that he believed the scout leader at the time, Mr Joe Cuddy (deceased), gave the document to the rector of St Peter's, who in turn passed it on to Bishop Herlihy. The rector at the time does not recall receiving such a report. Two officials from the scouting movement confirmed to the Inquiry that they had made contact with Bishop Herlihy about Fr Fortune's behaviour in the boy scouts.

When posted to Belfast, Fr Fortune was prohibited from any contact with The Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland although he did form his own scout group which was independent of the CBSI.

4.5.4 CARL

Carl alleged the following:

Carl had two sons who were involved in the boy scouts in St Peter's College. In 1978, one of his sons told him that during a camping trip, Sean Fortune had abused or attempted to abuse some of the boys. At the same time, a neighbour reported to Carl that she was removing her sons from St Peter's because of the activities of Sean Fortune. Carl had a meeting with the then president of St Peter's and another senior staff member at the seminary. According to Carl, the president of the college refused to listen to what he had to say but the senior staff member was shocked and said that something would have to be done and some sort of investigation would have to take place. However, a year later, Sean Fortune was ordained and no action appeared to have been taken.

Carl said that at the time of speaking to the authorities in St Peter's, there were a lot of rumours circulating that Sean Fortune was interfering with children and, according to Carl, the *"dogs in the street seemed to know that he was a homosexual"*. Approximately a year after Fr Fortune was ordained, Carl went to see Bishop Herlihy about another matter and was asked whether he had an opinion on Sean Fortune. Carl said that he told Bishop Herlihy that Sean Fortune had abused his son and that he would never allow him into his house again. Bishop Herlihy made it clear to Carl that he had heard other complaints about Sean Fortune from Belfast and Dundalk.

4.5.5 DECLAN

Declan alleged the following:

In his evidence before the Inquiry, Declan described an incident that he alleges occurred at a scout camp in Duncannon in 1978 before Sean Fortune's ordination. During that camp, Fortune masturbated a boy until he ejaculated in front of a number of other boys. Sean Fortune treated it all as a prank. Declan told the Inquiry that everybody was shocked and appalled.

Declan described being in his home while his parents were on holiday and being cared for by his aunt and uncle. Fr Fortune invited him out and although Declan pleaded not to be made go, his aunt did not wish to refuse a priest and insisted that Declan go. Fr Fortune told his aunt that if they were late they would stay overnight in Poulfur which they did.

Sean Fortune told Declan to sleep in a single bed in his Fr Fortune's bedroom. Fr Fortune quickly brought the conversation around to homosexuality and spent the night flattering and attempting to physically assault and rape Declan over a ten hour period. Declan resisted a constant barrage of a sexual nature from Sean Fortune and demanded to be brought home the next day. Declan told his parents about what had occurred.

Declan's father was extremely angry and spoke with Bishop Herlihy about the incident. Declan's father did not raise the problem of Fr Fortune with Bishop Comiskey until the end of the 1980s.

4.5.6 CHARLES

Charles alleged the following:

In his statement to the Gardai, Charles alleged that in the late 1970s he was an altar boy at the Holy Rosary Church, Ormeau Road, Belfast. He was also involved in the boy scouts. One night he was doing paperwork at a room in the priests' house while Fr Fortune was present. Fr Fortune asked him to play a game. He started to tap him on his private parts and told Charles to do the same back, which he did. After a short period of time both lay on the couch and Fr Fortune started to fondle Charles' private parts. When Charles tried to get away, they both fell on the floor and Fr Fortune held him down. When he eventually got away from Fr Fortune he threatened to tell the parish priest and left the house. Charles went on to allege that approximately one month later the boy scouts from Belfast were on camping trip to Gorey, Co Wexford. Whilst there, Charles witnessed Fr Fortune doing the same thing (i.e., tapping of the private parts) to two younger boys. He called the boys away from Fr Fortune as he knew what was going to happen to them. After this, Charles left the scouts. Charles did not speak to anyone about his experience with Fr Fortune until after Fr Fortune's arrest in 1995 when he made a statement to the Gardai.

4.5.7 STUDENTS FROM ST MARY'S COLLEGE, BELFAST

The Spiritual Director at St Malachy's College in Belfast, was approached by a student who was known to him from another school, St Mary's College. The

student was approaching on his own behalf and on behalf of a fellow student. Both of them had been importuned by Fr Fortune. The Spiritual Director was not clear as to the details of the allegation, though he believes it involved an attempt by Fr Fortune to get them into bed.

The Spiritual Director said he reported the allegation immediately to Dr Philbin, Bishop of Down and Connor. Dr Philbin said "*leave it to me*". He says that by the next day Fr Fortune was out of the Diocese. Even before this complaint, Dr Philbin was taking steps to remove Fr Fortune from the Diocese. There was anxiety that he was inveigling people into donating money to him and was not sufficiently sensitive to the political and social situation in which he was operating.

4.5.8 PETER

Peter alleged the following:

Peter was born and educated in Dundalk and met Sean Fortune through a group called Youth Encounter. Sean Fortune asked the group to seek their parents' permission to go on a Youth Encounter weekend to a neighbouring parish. Peter was about 13 or 14 at the time and his parents were happy to let him go. Originally, the arrangement had been that he would stay with a host family but when he arrived, he was told by Fr Fortune that he would be staying with him for the night. Peter was not concerned about this change of plan and even felt flattered that the priest, whom he admired and respected, would elect to have him stay with him.

Peter alleged to the Inquiry that the first night of the retreat was uneventful but on the second night, he awoke to find Sean Fortune naked and getting into bed beside him. Fr Fortune told him there was nothing to worry about and began having oral sex with him. Peter begged Fr Fortune to leave him alone but he refused to do so.

Peter alleged that over the next few days, Fr Fortune met him after school and told him that he was the one with a problem and that if he did not let Fortune help him, he would have to tell his parents. Peter said that that frightened him more than what Fr Fortune did. After Fr Fortune moved away from Dundalk in 1981 he returned at least once a month and for the next two years engaged in sexual activity including rape with Peter between ten and twelve times.

In the early 1990s when Peter was 25, Fr Fortune contacted him, apologising for everything that had happened and telling him that he would help him get a job. Peter visited Fr Fortune in Ballymurn and said that on one occasion he visited Bishop Brendan Comiskey with Fr Fortune in his residence in Wexford. During that visit to Ballymurn, Peter met with two men who, according to him were in a sexual relationship with Fortune. This meeting prompted him to disclose his abuse to Bishop Comiskey. The Bishop wrote back enclosing Stg£400 and assuring Peter that his concerns would be looked into. Bishop Comiskey has told the Inquiry that he has no memory of receiving any letter from Peter; he also denies sending Peter any money. Peter told the Inquiry that he received a further letter and payment of Stg£100 from Bishop Comiskey in 1997, but again Bishop Comiskey denies that such a letter or money was ever sent. No records of these transactions appear in the diocesan files furnished to the Inquiry.

4.5.9 SIMON

Simon alleged the following:

It is important to note that this is an allegation of sexual abuse and not of child sexual abuse as Simon was 21 years old at the time of the alleged offence. It was the first recorded complaint made to Bishop Brendan Comiskey about Sean Fortune. The young man in question visited Fethard-on-Sea in 1984 with a group of friends. Fr Fortune invited them to his house for a meal and invited the group to speak to him about any personal problems that they might have had. Simon was concerned that he might be homosexual and at Fr Fortune's suggestion, stayed behind after the group left to discuss his difficulties further. That night Fr Fortune asked Simon to join him in bed and intercourse took place. Simon described being terrified by what had occurred.

In December 1985, Simon met with Bishop Comiskey under a false name and told him what had happened. Bishop Comiskey has told the Inquiry that although he had had concerns about Fr Fortune before then, this account by Simon was the first definite complaint he had received, and even though Simon was not willing to make a formal recorded statement, it gave Bishop Comiskey the moral certitude to act against Fr Fortune. The result of Simon's complaint was that Fr Fortune was sent by Bishop Comiskey to a psychiatrist in Dublin who recommended residential treatment for Fr Fortune. Although Bishop Comiskey has said that Simon's complaint led directly to Fr Fortune's removal from Poulfur, this did not occur until October 1987, almost two years after meeting the complainant. Simon did not report the incident with Fr Fortune to the Gardai until 1995. No prosecution occurred because, by then, homosexual activity had been decriminalised and there was a perceived difficulty in establishing a lack of consent.

4.5.10 WILLIAM

William alleged the following:

William originally made his complaint of child sexual abuse to the Diocese by writing directly to Bishop Comiskey on 17 October 1987. This was done at the suggestion of Fr Sean Devereux who succeeded Fr Fortune as curate in Poulfur. William began his letter by saying that he was sexually abused by Fr Fortune for some years during his term of ministry in Poulfur. William explained how he had had a great deal of respect and trust for Fr Fortune before the abuse occurred and that he had been a very religious boy. He said that Fr Fortune's initial approaches involved him touching his genitals and asking William to touch him. He said that, although he was sickened by this, he was terrified to tell anyone because he did not think he would be believed. Sean Fortune arranged with his mother that William would spend a week with him in Dublin. On the first night he was abused so badly and was so disgusted that he was violently ill. He made Fr Fortune bring him home the next day and threatened to tell his parents and the Gardai about what had occurred. Although Fr Fortune continued to contact him, William avoided him from that time onwards. He told Bishop Comiskey in his letter that whilst he had recovered from the trauma himself, he worried about what Fr Fortune could do

with other young boys. Almost two years after William's initial complaint, he was asked to attend a meeting with a Canon lawyer, Fr Robert Noonan, in All Hallows. This meeting was part of a Canon law process that Bishop Comiskey had commenced in order to determine Fr Fortune's future in the Diocese. Fr Noonan spoke with William and reported that he found his story capable of being true. Some months later he met with Fr Fortune and reported that he found Fr Fortune's denial of the allegations brought by William also capable of being true.

When William's story was reported in the press, Bishop Comiskey specifically and vehemently denied two aspects of it. Firstly, he repudiated William's statement that a meeting had taken place between William and a Canon lawyer in Maynooth. In fact, the meeting had taken place in All Hallows. By his denial, the impression was given by the Bishop that no meeting had taken place at all. This had the effect of discrediting William and increasing the media spotlight on him. When asked by this Inquiry why he had not simply clarified the location of the meeting, Bishop Comiskey said that he did not consider it the media's business where such a meeting took place.

Secondly, Bishop Comiskey denied writing to William to apologise for the abuse perpetrated by Sean Fortune. William's mother informed the Inquiry that a letter was received by William in reply to his letter of 17 October 1988 and that it expressed regret for what had occurred with Fr Fortune. Bishop Comiskey has acknowledged that a letter of regret could have been sent to William although no letter of apology would have been sent. This is in keeping with Bishop Comiskey's position throughout his episcopacy that he could not apologise for the activities of priests who either were deceased at the time of the allegation or were denying it. However, by denying rather than clarifying the story, Bishop Comiskey caused additional suffering to the young man and his family. The media attention became so oppressive that William's mother informed the Inquiry that of everything that had happened to her and her family arising out of this matter, the media attention was the most difficult to cope with. She expressed a view to this Inquiry that Bishop Comiskey had a responsibility to William to ensure that by making the complaint to him and to the Gardai, he did not suffer adversely. The Inquiry shares this view and would emphasise the importance of all abuse allegations being treated sensitively and confidentially by all parties concerned. Proceedings issued by William against the Diocese were eventually settled.

4.5.11 IAN

Ian alleged the following:

At about 16 years of age, Ian attended a communications course organised by the Mater Hospital in conjunction with other hospital radio stations. Fr Fortune was conducting the course and he was presented as the Church's leading communications expert. Ian got a job in the same building as was being used by Fr Fortune to make a recording for broadcast and Ian was delighted to learn as much as he could from him. Ian said that one day while he was working on the sound desk, Fr Fortune bent over him to show him how to do something and pressed down on him. He then fumbled with his belt and Ian shouted "no, no", struggling for breath. He said that Fr Fortune took down his trousers, fondled his genitals and buggered him. He said this was brutal and painful and occurred despite struggles

to get away. Ian says that Fr Fortune left him “*in a mess on the floor, bleeding heavily*”. Fr Fortune proceeded to carry out sound mixing in the studio while Ian was sobbing. He says that Fr Fortune came back and told him it would be better for him not to tell anyone and Ian promised that he would not tell anyone about the abuse. Ian issued proceedings against the Bishop of Ferns in 2002 which were settled by the Diocese.

4.5.12 FRANK

Frank alleged the following:

Frank was abused by Fr Fortune from the early 1980s for a period of two years. Fr Fortune became friendly with Frank’s family and was a regular visitor to their home. He invited Frank to spend a weekend in Poulfur with him. Fr Fortune sexually assaulted Frank during that weekend by intimate touching and mutual masturbation. Fr Fortune then threatened to tell Frank’s parents what had occurred if he did not return to Poulfur for visits and this started a pattern of abuse which lasted for a period of two years. Frank was collected from his home and brought to Poulfur. During these weekends sexual assaults including touching genitals, oral sex and masturbation took place. During one of these visits, Fr Fortune buggered him. Fr Fortune did not ejaculate but masturbated himself. Fr Fortune tried to force Frank to have anal sex with him but Frank found that he was unable. Three years after the abuse had started, Frank asked Fr Fortune for financial help. Fr Fortune agreed on condition that Frank found a young boy to sleep with him. Frank ceased contact with Fr Fortune at that point.

In the mid 1990s after his sister attended a family wedding, Frank was made aware that Fr Fortune had been paying a lot of attention to the teenagers there. This alerted Frank to the possibility that what had happened to him might be happening to other boys.

He complained to Garda Patrick Mulcahy of Wexford Garda Station in February 1995 and in March 1995 Fr Sean Fortune was interviewed. Once that Garda investigation commenced, more witnesses came forward to tell stories of abuse by Sean Fortune.

Bishop Comiskey placed Fr Fortune on administrative leave in March 1995 but Frank said that the Bishop did not remove the authority that Fr Fortune had as a priest and as someone who effectively had dominion over children. Although Frank feels outraged at the way Bishop Comiskey handled his allegation against Sean Fortune, he does acknowledge that this was a problem inherited by Bishop Comiskey from his predecessor. Frank claims that the wider Church had serious questions to answer about how a priest like Fr Fortune could have been ordained and placed in a parish given the amount of information available about him. He said that although Bishop Comiskey made public expressions of care, compassion and support, they were never addressed directly to him.

Frank instituted civil proceedings against Bishop Comiskey as the only method available to him of securing a public apology for the abuse that occurred. The case was settled on the payment of substantial damages and the reading out of an apology in open court.

4.5.13 PATRICK

Patrick alleged the following:

Patrick was hitching home from Wexford hospital where he had received treatment for a facial injury when he was picked up by Fr Fortune in his car. Fr Fortune spoke to him about relationships and sexual preferences. Towards the end of the journey he asked Patrick about the scarring on his face. Patrick said Fr Fortune masturbated himself throughout the journey and then smeared his face with semen telling Patrick that it would heal his face. Patrick said that he felt physically and psychologically intimidated. Patrick told the Inquiry that Fr Fortune later sought him out at his work place. Patrick was raped and abused by Fr Fortune approximately three times a week for two to three years.

Once, Patrick saw his cousin Brendan (4.5.21) being called away by Fortune. Patrick tried to warn his own mother of the danger to Brendan. She dismissed the suggestion outright and physically attacked Patrick. Patrick said that Fr Fortune heard that he had tried to speak to his, Patrick's, mother and that night he was subjected to a particularly brutal rape. After that, Patrick said he did not dare to speak to anyone about his abuse especially not the Bishop.

Patrick told the Inquiry that *"half of the village was pro-Fortune and the other half anti-Fortune"*. Despite this division, he feels that Fr Fortune had total control of the village. He believes that everyone was aware of allegations against Fr Fortune.

Patrick has said that words could never describe the devastating impact this has had on his life for decades.

Patrick first made a complaint to the Diocese in 2002 and has now settled proceedings against the Diocese.

4.5.14 MARK

Mark alleged the following:

Mark first came into contact with Fr Fortune when he was a member of a youth club which was held in the basement of Fr Fortune's house in Poulfur in Co Wexford. He attended a retreat weekend in the early 1980s when he was twelve years old during which Fr Fortune sexually assaulted him. Mark was pre-pubertal and was not sexually aware at the time. He was frightened and bewildered by what had occurred. Fr Fortune told him not to tell anyone what had happened. On two further occasions Fr Fortune sexually assaulted Mark in his, Fr Fortune's house in Poulfur. Mark told Fr Fortune that what he was doing was wrong. Fr Fortune told him that because he was a priest and could not get married what he was doing was not wrong but that it must be kept a secret. Mark never disclosed this abuse to anybody because he thought he would not be believed. His parents were very religious and involved in the Church and he felt confused and guilty because he believed he had allowed the incidents to happen.

As a result of the abuse, his relationship with his parents deteriorated and he eventually left home and went abroad. During an argument on a visit home, he told his parents about the abuse. His parents took his allegations very seriously. Mark and his parents went to see a priest of the diocese in 1990 and told him that

Mark had been interfered with by Sean Fortune. The Inquiry has heard evidence from this priest who confirmed that this meeting with Mark's family took place and that he spoke with the diocesan secretary, the following day. Bishop Comiskey was apparently absent from the diocese at the time. This priest informed the Inquiry that he told the family that they should seek counselling for Mark if necessary and he identified a counselling source for Mark. He also advised them that they should consider going to the Gardai.

Bishop Comiskey said that he had never heard anything about Mark's complaint before 1995. In response to this, the priest in question went to a solicitor in 1995 and swore an affidavit confirming that he had relayed the complaint to diocesan offices. He told the Inquiry that he had never mentioned the allegations again and never asked the family about Mark. The diocesan secretary has attended this Inquiry and has confirmed that he is completely satisfied that he brought this complaint to the attention of the Bishop although he confirmed to the Inquiry that he could find no written record of a communication of this complaint to Bishop Comiskey.

4.5.15 THOMAS

Thomas alleged the following:

Thomas alleged that he was abused by Fr Fortune in the early 1980s when he was 16 years of age. He went to Poulfur to join the youth club where he met Fr Fortune. On one occasion, Fr Fortune suggested Thomas spend the night in Fr Fortune's house. Twice during the night, Thomas awoke to find Fr Fortune touching him and when he realised what was happening he tried to jump out of the bed. His sister confirmed to the Inquiry that she and her mother realised that something had happened with Fr Fortune but did not know exactly what. The family stopped attending mass in Poulfur and went to a neighbouring parish instead. Thomas made this allegation known for the first time to the Gardai in 1995.

4.5.16 RONAN

Ronan alleged the following:

In the early 1980s, Ronan was an altar boy at Poulfur church where Fr Fortune was a curate. He describes driving in a car with Fr Fortune and two elderly people who were sitting in the back of the car. Ronan was in the front passenger seat when Fr Fortune began to feel his private parts, so much so that it hurt Ronan. Ronan said that Fr Fortune was always offering inducements like a stereo, large sums of money, or a motor bike to sleep with him. Ronan first reported this abuse to the Gardai in 1995.

4.5.17 GRAHAM

Graham alleged the following:

Graham was holidaying in Wexford in the early 1980s when he was befriended by Fr Fortune who asked him to paint his house. He was offered food and lodgings at the house. Whilst there, he was sexually assaulted by Fr Fortune. He described how shock and fear froze him into immobility. Fr Fortune forced him to swear on the Bible not to tell anyone. He first reported this allegation to the Gardai in 1995.

4.5.18 GARY

Gary alleged the following:

Gary was born in the early 1970s and was employed by Fr Fortune in the grounds of Poulfur church in the late 1980s. Gary states that on one occasion, Fr Fortune brought him into the office and asked him if he would go to bed with him, and told him that he could have anything he wanted if he did so. Gary refused this proposition and also refused to kiss Fr Fortune. As he was leaving the office, Fr Fortune handed him a £10 note and told him to say nothing about what had happened. After this incident, Gary stopped working at the church and never returned to it. Gary first reported this incident to the Gardai in 1995.

4.5.19 ADRIAN

Adrian alleged the following:

Adrian was born in the early 1970s and was a member of the youth club at Poulfur run by Fr Fortune. When he was in his mid-teens, Fr Fortune offered him work on a FÁS scheme. Adrian called to the priests' house at Fr Fortune's request to discuss this. During the discussion, Fr Fortune offered Adrian £20 for a "*blow job*". Adrian refused and left as quickly as he could.

Adrian says that he told a curate in the diocese after Fr Fortune had been removed from Poulfur of the incident between himself and Fr Fortune. This priest has stated that although he asked "Adrian" whether he had been abused by Fr Fortune, Adrian did not state positively that he was so abused. Adrian reported this abuse to the Gardai in 1995.

4.5.20 LUKE

Luke alleged the following:

Luke was a member of the youth club which met in Fr Fortune's house in Poulfur. Fr Fortune called Luke into his office and questioned him on his sexuality and on his relationship with girls. The conversation then turned to sleeping with boys. Fr Fortune asked Luke "would you sleep with me if I asked you to", but before Luke could answer, the doorbell rang and Fr Fortune left the room. When he returned, Luke told him he wanted to leave immediately. Fr Fortune forced Luke to swear on the Bible that he would not mention their conversation to anyone. Luke first reported this allegation to the Gardai in 1995.

4.5.21 BRENDAN

Brendan's parents alleged the following:

Brendan's parents attended the Ferns Inquiry to speak about their son who committed suicide in the late 1980s. They said that they were convinced that Brendan was driven to suicide by Fr Sean Fortune with whom he had a lot of contact. Brendan's parents told the Inquiry that when Fr Fortune came to Poulfur, Brendan was about 14. He got involved in one of the FÁS schemes which Sean Fortune introduced to the area.

Brendan's mother told the Inquiry that Brendan accompanied Fr Fortune on different outings. He went to Loftus Hall and on a religious course to Maynooth for a week. Brendan's mother told the Inquiry that on one occasion when Brendan returned from a weekend away with Fr Fortune, he was unable to walk properly and there was a great deal of blood on his clothes. He told his mother that he had haemorrhoids but that he did not want to go to a doctor. Brendan's mother said that she asked Brendan if Fr Fortune had interfered with him and he said no, but she said he did give her a strange look as if to say, "*What do you know?*"

Brendan's parents confirmed to the Inquiry that they had heard that some of the boys in Poulfur were alleging that Fr Fortune was abusing them. However, they said they thought that it was a terrible thing for the boys to be saying about a priest and did not understand it. Brendan's parents contacted the diocese after Fr Fortune's suicide.

4.5.22 KEITH

It is alleged as follows:

Keith committed suicide in the mid 1980s. He was very friendly with Brendan (4.5.21) who also committed suicide. A number of people who came before the Inquiry mentioned Keith and his association with Fr Sean Fortune and made the connection between Keith's death and his abuse by Fortune. Patrick (4.5.13) confirmed that Keith was one of a group of boys who frequented the old castle in Fethard and that Fortune used to "hunt them down" and on occasion, rape particular boys that he would catch. Keith was regularly in the company of Fr Sean Fortune and went away on retreat weekends with him. Keith became more and more depressed and the family became convinced that there was some problem with Fr Sean Fortune.

The family wrote to Bishop Eamonn Walsh who said a Mass on the anniversary of Keith's death. The family also instructed solicitors to bring proceedings against the diocese but these were later discontinued. The family still maintains a close connection with the Church but believes that Keith's death was directly caused by the abuse perpetrated on him by Fr Sean Fortune

4.5.23 KIERAN

Kieran alleged the following:

Kieran said that in the mid-1980s when he was 15 or 16 years of age, he joined a FÁS scheme which was run by Fr Sean Fortune in Poulfur. He was working in the graveyard when he heard screaming from Fr Fortune's house. He went to the back door, opened it and saw Fr Fortune abusing a young teenager. Two other adults were there. He told the child afterwards that he should go to the Gardai and get help.

Kieran told the Inquiry that he spoke with another priest in a neighbouring parish about what he had seen. Kieran said that the priest asked him for a detailed account of the abuse and a demonstration of how the abuse occurred. He said the priest put his hand on Kieran's penis. Kieran said he hit his hand away. He said that the priest put his, Kieran's name into a book in the church and said that he would tell the Bishop what had happened. Many years later when he met the priest again, the priest told him that he had told the Bishop what had happened with Fr Fortune and also apologised for what he himself had done. The said priest is now deceased and there is no information in the diocesan file in connection with the matter.

4.5.24 DANIEL

Daniel alleged the following:

Daniel first encountered Fr Sean Fortune in the late eighties when he was 13 or 14 years of age. Daniel was in a cubicle of the public toilet beside his school when a tall, dark man whom he subsequently identified as being Fr Fortune, forced his way into the cubicle and buggered Daniel. Daniel returned to school but was clearly upset and broke down when asked what was wrong with him. Daniel told his teacher that he had been approached by a man in the toilet. He did not say that he had been raped. The teacher reported the matter to An Garda Síochána. A Garda interviewed him at home. Daniel said that he was unable to disclose what had happened because his father was present while he was being questioned. He merely said he was grabbed by a man – no mention was made of a priest as he did not know Fr Fortune at that time and would not have known his assailant was a priest. He never met the Garda again.

Daniel says that Fr Fortune hung around outside his school for a few weeks after that. Some time later, Daniel started working in a shop. On one occasion Fr Fortune stopped at the shop and casually told Daniel that he had had an AIDS test in recent weeks in St James's Hospital and that he, Daniel, had nothing to worry about.

On his 18th birthday, Daniel and his employer opened a business in a Wexford town. Less than a year later, Fr Fortune was still harassing Daniel and on one occasion after drinking alcohol, Daniel drove to the top of Vinegar Hill in Wexford and cut his wrists with a Stanley knife. A Garda found him and he was taken to hospital by ambulance.

Shortly after this, in the early 1990s, Daniel had to close his business leaving debts of £15,000. Fortune offered him a job and in desperation, Daniel accepted. Daniel went to Fortune's house three days a week and on each occasion sexual activity occurred. Daniel received £100 a week for the first three weeks only, although the period of abuse continued over a four year period.

Daniel claims that he saw Bishop Comiskey with other people at Fr Fortune's house in Ballymurn on a number of occasions. The Inquiry asked Daniel whether Fr Fortune talked about Bishop Comiskey. He said that he talked about him all the time and was initially very fond of him and "*thought he was God*".

On one occasion when Fortune was chasing him, Daniel telephoned the Bishop's house at two in the morning. He spoke with Fr Tommy Brennan and can remember being very frightened but said that the conversation was very short. He told Fr Brennan he was in Wexford and that Fr Fortune was chasing him. He was speaking to Fr Brennan from his mobile telephone and Sean Fortune was in his car driving up and down the streets. Fr Tommy Brennan told Daniel to call the Bishop the following day. Daniel felt that Fr Brennan had taken his complaint seriously enough and that he seemed quite calm. Fr Brennan has confirmed this account of Daniel's telephone call to the Inquiry,

The next day Fr Fortune pleaded with Daniel not to see Bishop Comiskey. He promised to leave Daniel alone so Daniel agreed.

In 1995 Daniel met Fr Fortune who was in a very agitated state. He had been charged with more than sixty counts of sexual abuse. Fr Fortune told Daniel that Daniel would have to appear in court as a character witness and that their relationship would be made public. It was a constant threat of Fr Sean Fortune's that if Daniel did not do what he said; he would tell his parents how much in love he was with Daniel. Fr Fortune claimed that the Bishop had advised him to go to Brussels although Bishop Comiskey has strongly denied to this Inquiry that he gave such advice. Under pressure from Fr Fortune, Daniel tried to escape on a ferry to France. Fr Fortune telephoned the captain of the vessel and had Daniel detained at Cherbourg. Daniel was returned home and Fr Fortune continued to harass him. According to Daniel, Fr Fortune gave him £7,500.

Three weeks before Fr Fortune committed suicide, Daniel wrote to Bishop Comiskey seeking a meeting. They met on ten occasions although only once before the death of the priest. He said that the first thing that Bishop Comiskey said to him was "*Fortune is an abomination*". Daniel said he felt really at ease because he felt that Bishop Comiskey hated Fortune as much as he did. As a result of his meetings with Bishop Comiskey, Daniel received counselling paid for out of diocesan funds.

In February 2002, the Diocese contacted Daniel. The diocesan spokesperson said that a newspaper had been informed that there had been a settlement with somebody who had been abused by Fr Fortune in the previous year. According to Daniel's testimony to the Inquiry, he was told by a spokesperson for the diocese that they had received a fax from a newspaper and that there was a possibility that his name would be revealed to the press. This caused him great worry and anxiety as he had not disclosed the alleged abuse to his parents. In fact no reference to him appeared in the papers and he subsequently revealed the abuse to his parents.

4.5.25 VINCENT

Vincent alleged the following:

Vincent was not a native of Wexford. When he was 17/18 years old, he decided to look for summer work in Rosslare. He arrived in Wexford by bus at about six o'clock one Friday evening in the late 1980s. He was looking for a hostel when he noticed a priest from whom he asked directions. The priest offered to help Vincent find work and invited him to stay in his house until after the weekend. This priest was Fr Sean Fortune and Vincent described how relieved and safe he felt under the protection of a priest. All of his experiences of priests until that time had been good.

Both attended a choir practice on that first evening and Vincent described that night that he spent in Fr Fortune's house as being "*absolutely fine*". At approximately 2 o'clock on Saturday morning, Fr Fortune came into the guest bedroom where Vincent was sleeping and, after undressing himself, removed Vincent's clothes. A series of sexual assaults took place that night mainly involving masturbation and oral sex. Vincent was frightened and stunned. He remembers Fr Fortune saying "*this is natural*". He said to Vincent that he must not tell anyone what had happened as nobody would believe him because Fr Fortune was a well respected priest. On Sunday night Fr Fortune raped Vincent which he described as extremely painful and shocking. On the Monday, Fr Fortune handed Vincent his bus fare home and instructed his housekeeper to drive Vincent to the bus station. Vincent returned home and told nobody about what had occurred. He said he was too ashamed to go to the Gardai. Vincent realised that what had happened him had happened to many other people when the television documentary "Suing the Pope" was aired. This gave him courage to speak about his experience which he did for the first time in 2003.

Vincent was not in a position to confirm where this abuse occurred. If Vincent was indeed seventeen years of age, it was probably in Poulfur but if, as he believes, the abuse occurred in Ballymurn, Vincent would have to have been older.

Vincent commenced proceedings against the Diocese of Ferns in July 2003. These proceedings were settled in July 2004.

4.5.26 COLIN

Colin alleged the following:

Colin described an incident of child sexual abuse involving Fr Sean Fortune which occurred when he was twelve in 1979 in Wexford. The incident occurred in a public toilet. Fr Fortune pushed him into the cubicle and bolted the door. He then raped Colin. When he was finished he adjusted his clothing, unlocked the door and left, saying that he would see Colin again, and that he was a good boy. Colin left the toilet and ran home. He removed his bloodied and stained underclothes. He never spoke of the incident to anybody.

Because Colin came from a difficult family background, he felt he could not disclose any of the abuse he had suffered to his parents or to anyone else.

Colin married in 1987. The priest who married him mentioned that they had a mutual acquaintance. Colin knew immediately that he was referring to Fr Fortune and also that this priest knew what had happened to him. Some years later, in 1992, Colin was standing at the side of the main street in Wexford with his baby son when Fr Fortune came up behind him and spoke to him. Colin said that he barely recognised him physically because he had gained so much weight but that he immediately recognised the voice. Fr Fortune said to him that he needed work done in his house in Ballymurn and that if Colin was not prepared to do it, he would tell Colin's wife and other people what he had done when he was 12.

Colin told the Inquiry that he was terrified that his wife would hear about what had happened and so he agreed to go to Ballymurn. He worked there for 10 months.

Colin said that on almost every occasion when he attended Fr Fortune in Ballymurn he was obliged to perform oral sex. He said that he was not raped again by Fr Fortune. He said Fr Fortune telephoned him up to three times a week demanding that he visit Fr Fortune at Ballymurn. He was working full time at this stage and Fr Fortune paid him very little for the work he did so he borrowed money to convince his wife that he was making extra money by working for Fr Fortune.

During this period, he met two priests of the diocese who, when they heard that Colin had been working with Fr Fortune, warned him against it although according to Colin it was acknowledged by them that Fr Fortune was more of a danger to young boys than to adults. This was the first indication Colin had that Fr Fortune might be involved with people apart from himself. Within a month, Colin stopped visiting Fr Fortune. One of the reasons he broke off contact was that Fr Fortune regularly asked him to leave his son with him when he ran errands. Colin never did this and had grave concerns about Fr Fortune asking it.

Colin told the Inquiry that when he was in Ballymurn he never saw Fr Fortune with anybody else. He said that Fr Fortune would often be in a very bad temper after a meeting and he would take it out on whoever was present. He said Fr Fortune slapped and punched him on these occasions.

Colin did not report this abuse to any of the State or Church authorities before attending the Inquiry. He said that had his family situation been different, he might have considered going to the Gardai, but in his circumstances he felt so alone and isolated that he had nobody to turn to. He said that when "Suing the Pope" television documentary was broadcast, he was very tempted to come forward but was unable to do so. He explained that it is only after two years of counselling that he is able to speak about what happened.

He said that the shame, guilt and isolation he felt as a result of his abuse deeply affected his life but that with counselling, he was managing to cope. He is happily married with children and was dealing with what had happened to him as well as he can.

4.6 MONSIGNOR MICHAEL LEDWITH

4.6.1 SEMINARIAN GROUP AND FR GERARD MCGINNITY

It is alleged as follows:

The Inquiry spoke with a group of six former seminarians, a former student, and Fr Gerard McGinnity, formerly Senior Dean in Maynooth College, in relation to complaints made against Monsignor Ledwith to various bishops in 1983 and 1984.

The group of former seminarians maintain that they voiced concerns over their seminary training, Monsignor Ledwith's allegedly extravagant lifestyle and his alleged sexual orientation and propensity. They shared anxieties over Monsignor Ledwith's preferential treatment of certain students and his relationship with such students which they believed was inappropriate. One seminarian in particular said that, although he was in no doubt that he expressed to the bishops he met his concern over Monsignor Ledwith's sexual behaviour, this concern was definitely more of an anxiety with regard to orientation and propensity rather than with specific sexual activity. Contrary to media reports, no specific allegations were made against Monsignor Ledwith but rather a concern was expressed in the general sense. The other five seminarians who attended the Ferns Inquiry confirmed this version of events.

None of the bishops, still living, to whom it is contended this group of seminarians spoke and who were contacted by the Inquiry, could recall any mention of sexual impropriety at their meetings with the members of the group or any of them.

After meeting with various bishops, including Bishop Comiskey, the group was dissatisfied with the response received and reported the matter to Fr Gerard McGinnity in his capacity as senior Dean. Fr McGinnity spoke to Cardinal Tomàs O'Fiaich, Archbishop Dermot Ryan and Bishop Kevin McNamara (all of whom are now deceased). He also expressed his concerns in a confidential document returned by him to the Papal Nuncio. Bishop Casey became aware of the communication between Fr McGinnity and the three Bishops. At a subsequent meeting with Fr McGinnity, Bishop Casey called upon him to produce a victim of sexual abuse by Monsignor Ledwith. Fr McGinnity did not know of such a victim and therefore could not have produced one. His purpose had been to relate concerns as to the appropriateness of his relationship with some students. He never had any specific allegations to report. On the basis that a senior dean could not continue in the college after making such serious allegations against a Vice-President of the college, Fr McGinnity was required to remove himself from Maynooth on a year's sabbatical after which he was not re-admitted. Monsignor Ledwith was appointed President of Maynooth College ten months after Fr McGinnity's removal.

4.6.2 RAYMOND

Raymond alleged the following:

In 1994, Raymond alleged that he was abused by Monsignor Ledwith in the early 1980s when he was 13 years of age until after his 15th birthday. The exact age at which this abuse is alleged to have commenced is in dispute as Monsignor Ledwith states that he only became acquainted with this family after Raymond was 15 years old.

Raymond alleges that Monsignor Ledwith abused him in his, Raymond's home and in Monsignor Ledwith's house. The abuse amounted to touching and masturbation.

As a result of speaking to his parents about the abuse he went to meet Bishop Newman, Bishop of Limerick. Bishop Newman dismissed Raymond abruptly. The bishop's secretary, Fr Liam O'Sullivan, suggested that he should go to see Cardinal Daly. Cardinal Daly travelled to meet Raymond and then referred the matter to Bishop Comiskey who was Monsignor Ledwith's Bishop.

Bishop Comiskey informed the Inquiry that he met with Raymond and as a result he was more decisive in acting against Monsignor Ledwith. He set up a Canonical investigation and sought to have Monsignor Ledwith's priestly faculties removed. This is dealt with at Chapter Five of this Report.

The Diocese paid for intensive counselling for Raymond and his family. The Bishop was persuaded by Raymond's family to use his good offices to find employment for Raymond. Raymond and his family were angry and bitter over the events that had occurred and are continuing to receive counselling. Monsignor Ledwith reached a financial settlement with Raymond which did not involve the Diocese of Ferns, without any admission of liability. The settlement contained a "confidentiality clause" which precluded Raymond from discussing this matter and in particular precluded him from assisting in the canonical process initiated by the Trustees of Maynooth College which is discussed at Chapter Five of this Report.

Raymond did not discuss the alleged abuse with the Inquiry and when contacted by it through his lawyers, his lawyers informed the Inquiry that he was always concerned about any publicity with regard to this matter. He was genuinely fearful that if he got involved in making a detailed complaint to the Garda Authorities he might not be able to preserve his anonymity. He was concerned about the impact such publicity would have on his family.

Monsignor Ledwith was similarly prevented from discussing this matter with the Inquiry but has at all times attested to his innocence of all allegations made.

4.6.3 SHANE

Shane alleged the following:

Shane was a third year seminarian in Maynooth when he claims he was abused by Monsignor Ledwith in November 1994. He first spoke about this incident to his General Practitioner in October 1997 when he attended for treatment for depression. He had left seminary training in 1995 and had started work as a secondary school teacher. He continued to receive treatment for depression and in March 2000 whilst receiving hospital treatment, he arranged a meeting with his former Bishop to inform him that he intended making a formal complaint to the Gardai about the sexual abuse he had experienced. He did not reveal the name of the alleged perpetrator to his bishop.

The hospital authorities contacted the Diocese of Ferns and the Gardai in 2000. In his first statement to the Gardai in April 2000, Shane described in detail a very serious rape he claimed was perpetrated by Monsignor Ledwith. The Gardai commenced a thorough investigation of the allegation. Although witnesses spoken to by the Gardai all attested to a sudden change in Shane's personality in November 1994, none of them could confirm any question of sexual abuse being raised except for one infirmary nurse who said she was concerned about that at the time.

In June 2001 Shane completely withdrew all allegations against the Monsignor stating that no rape took place but that a consensual sexual encounter had occurred.

Monsignor Ledwith stated to the Gardai that he did not know Shane and had never had any relationship with him at any time, either consensual or otherwise. He further stated that he was not in the country on the dates which Shane stated as being the days on which the abuse is alleged to have occurred and was in a position to prove that.

This allegation was later than the allegation at 4.6.2 above and Monsignor Ledwith was no longer in active ministry in the diocese. Bishop Comiskey had already informed the bishop in the diocese where Monsignor Ledwith was residing about the previous allegation. Bishop Comiskey informed the Bishop of Seattle of this further allegation against Monsignor Ledwith but did not inform the Archbishop when the allegation had been completely withdrawn.

The Gardai considered the desirability of prosecuting Shane for having made a false allegation but recommended to the DPP, who accepted the advice, that no such prosecution be brought because the view was taken that Shane was mentally unstable.

Shane commenced High Court proceedings against Maynooth College and Monsignor Ledwith but his withdrawal of the criminal charge led to the discontinuance of this action.

Monsignor Ledwith has told the Inquiry that it was difficult to convey in words the difficulty and expense caused to him and his family by this allegation which was proved to be without foundation and was made by a person whom he stated he did not know and was alleged to have occurred when he was not in Ireland.

4.7 CANON MARTIN CLANCY (Deceased)

4.7.1 MAEVE

Maeve alleged the following:

Maeve complained of abuse by Canon Martin Clancy from approximately 1965 until 1968. She alleges that Canon Clancy came to her house in 1965. He asked Maeve's mother to let him speak with Maeve quietly upstairs in her bedroom. Maeve's mother agreed to him doing this and he molested Maeve in her room. This occurred three or four times per week and continued for a period of approximately three years. Maeve told the Inquiry that Canon Clancy inserted his finger into her vagina while questioning her about her development and about her boyfriends. On one occasion he asked her to his house where he had full intercourse with her..

Maeve went to England at the age of 15 to escape from Canon Clancy but returned a year later. Maeve thought her mother knew of the abuse which occurred in her bedroom but later discovered she had not had any idea of what was happening.. Two years before he died, in or about 1991, he arrived at Maeve's door and attempted to kiss her.

Maeve told the Inquiry that she informed a curate of the diocese of the abuse prior to Canon Clancy's death. She also told the Inquiry that she discussed being abused by Canon Clancy with another local curate prior to Canon Clancy's death. This curate confirmed his recollection of a lady living in the same housing estate as Maeve sharing with him difficulties which she experienced as a result of sexual abuse by priests. He believes this discussion took place in the early 1990s. This complaint was not made known to the diocesan authorities at that time, which only became aware of her complaint when Bishop Walsh met with her on 15 April 2003 at her request.

4.7.2 JUDY

Judy alleged the following:

Judy suffered abuse by Canon Clancy, while she was in 5th class in Ballindaggin national school during the early 1970s. She alleged that Canon Clancy had taken charge of sex education classes. When she arrived at Canon Clancy's house for a class as directed by the school principal, she waited in the hall. He took her hand and led her into a study at the back of the house. Still holding her hand he sat down and brought her close to him between his legs. He then proceeded to physically examine Judy by removing her underclothing and feeling her very intimately and very painfully. Judy was 12 years of age at the time. Judy returned

to school and never told anyone what had occurred. She knows that other children were sent in similar circumstances to visit Canon Clancy.

Following these classes some of the children (three of whom Judy knows of) told their parents what Canon Clancy was doing and there were confrontations with Canon Clancy regarding his behaviour. There is even a suggestion that one parishioner physically assaulted Canon Clancy over his treatment of a child.

Judy confided what had happened to a friend of hers who is a former priest, in strictest confidence in or around 1990 or 1991. She told the Inquiry *"I was a child when I went in to that room in that house but when I left I was not a child"*. She feels that the Department of Education was in breach of its obligations to her in not properly monitoring Canon Clancy's sex education classes.

Judy has recently instituted civil proceedings in respect of this abuse although she did not make a complaint until after Canon Clancy's death.

4.7.3 CIARA

Ciara alleged the following:

Ciara had an interest in music and regularly played in concerts. During one of those concerts, when she was aged 11, she was dragged into a dressing room by Canon Clancy and molested. This occurred in 1971 and abuse continued until after she became pregnant at 14 years of age. Canon Clancy was attached to Wexford at the time. At the age of 13 she was abused by Canon Clancy in his car. She was also abused at an event which took place in 1973 when Canon Clancy took Ciara and her sister Oonagh, to stay at his house. She told the Inquiry that Canon Clancy arranged for her sister Oonagh to be brought to a dance and Ciara was then abused by Canon Clancy. She stated that sexual intercourse began when she was 14 years of age and she became pregnant as a result.

In 1974 she went to England due to her pregnancy and left a note telling her parents that she was pregnant but not identifying the father. She was taken home by her mother six weeks later. She did not identify the father of her child to her parents or family at that stage. Her daughter Rachel was born in 1975 and Canon Clancy eventually acknowledged Rachel as his daughter when Ciara was aged 16 years. He gave her two cheques, each in the sum of £500 for Rachel's upkeep.

At 17 years of age she stated that Canon Clancy threatened to have Rachel taken from her if Ciara told anybody that he was the father.

Fr John Sinnott, who was executor of Canon Clancy's will wrote to Rachel on 18 August 1993 approximately three months after the death of Canon Clancy enclosing a cheque in the sum of £3,000 which he described as *"money which was invested by Canon Clancy (RIP) and which I was to send you on maturity. It was his wish that this money is to be used for your further musical education. I hope it will help you in your pursuits and I wish you success. Yours sincerely, John Sinnott PP."*

She reported the matter in 2003 to the diocesan authorities when she read Bishop Walsh's address to the Ballindaggin church.

4.7.4 CLARE

Clare alleged the following:

Clare suffered abuse by Canon Clancy from 12 years of age while attending Ballindaggin national school in the early 1980s. She told the Inquiry that she is aware of other girls who had been abused by Canon Clancy.

Canon Clancy suggested teaching her how to play music and arranged for music lessons at his house several times a week when she was 12 years old. When she told her friends, they laughed and told her that she was going to be “the next one”. At the time, she did not know what they meant by this. She was always brought into the same room and remembers a writing desk there where he used to sit while Clare stood beside him practising music. During these lessons he would put his arm around her and make her stand between his legs while he sat. He placed his hand underneath her shirt or blouse and fondled her breasts while she played music. He always made sure she was concentrating on the music while he was caressing her breasts. He then started to put his hand up underneath her skirt and inside her underwear while rubbing her vagina. On several occasions he asked if it hurt and she answered that it did. She subsequently wore trousers on visits to the house. However, he used to pull the zipper down and put his hands inside her trousers and pants and continue with the abuse. She felt she could not tell her parents about the abuse as they had tremendous faith in Canon Clancy.

Clare wrote to Bishop Comiskey by letter dated 25 April 1991 outlining the full nature and extent of the abuse she had suffered by Canon Clancy. Bishop Comiskey replied to this letter on 1 May and offered to meet her. She lived abroad at the time and did not meet with the Bishop. There was no further contact with Ciara by Bishop Comiskey.

The Inquiry is aware that Clare’s father, Patrick, wrote to Fr Clancy on 2 June 1991 requesting payment of a certain sum of money coupled with a threat to begin criminal proceedings. This letter was passed to An Garda Síochána by the Diocese which resulted in two Garda members visiting the family home. This is dealt with in detail at chapter 7.

Bishop Comiskey appointed Canon Clancy as curate at Killealy parish on 28 September 1991.

On 28 February 1996, Fr Cosgrave, the diocesan delegate wrote to Bishop Comiskey in relation to a meeting he had with Angela, mother of Clare, who appeared upset at the attitude of the priests and the bishop. She stated that her husband had suffered serious health problems as a result of this matter.

4.7.5 KATE

Kate alleged the following:

Kate told the Inquiry of being sexually abused by Canon Clancy at eight years of age while attending Ballindaggin national school. The abuse continued until her first year at secondary school. Canon Clancy often took Kate out of class to give her music lessons in school or in his house nearby. He also took her out of class to

play at masses and funerals. This was never questioned by any of her teachers or school superiors. The abuse started with touching and culminated in rape. Kate alleges that she was raped on a weekly basis until she was 12. The abuse stopped after Canon Clancy left Ballindaggin and was moved to Killealy in 1991. She refused to attend classes in Killealy when this was suggested by Canon Clancy.

When she heard that Canon Clancy had died, Kate, who was still attending school, told a teacher that she had been abused by him. She did not mention that she had been raped. Sister Madeleine Ryan who was the school Principal, notified Bishop Comiskey. She arranged for Kate to attend counselling. Kate attended one counselling session in Dublin but does not recall the detail of what was discussed. Sr Ryan told her parents about the alleged abuse and her parents also attended the same psychologist for one session on their own. Kate stated that the abuse was never spoken about afterwards and there was no follow up

The Inquiry corresponded with Sr Madeleine Ryan. She confirmed that Kate had told her about the abuse and that she had contacted Kate's mother to inform her of the allegation and to suggest counselling. She stated that she told Bishop Comiskey what was alleged by Kate and asked him to pay for counselling expenses for her and her parents. Bishop Comiskey agreed to do this. Sr Ryan stated, "At that point, I handed over to the parents total responsibility for their child".

In an appraisal of this case in August 1995, Bishop Comiskey said, "*With regard to the therapy of the 16 year old girl who is attending the [named school], she received one payment and that was the last we ever heard of her. I am not greatly concerned because I have great faith and confidence in the Sister who was Principal of that particular school. I am sure if she needed anything further, that the Principal would have seen to that.*" Bishop Comiskey told the Inquiry that he did not play any role in this case save agreeing to pay for therapy.

4.8 FR BETA

4.8.1 TREVOR

Trevor alleged the following:

Trevor was invited to Gorey for a weekend with Fr Beta who was a family friend. Trevor remembers dining with Chinese food and some cans of lager while Fr Beta sat on the floor next to him.

The remainder of the evening is unclear in Trevor's memory as he was unaccustomed to alcohol. He awoke to find himself lying in Fr Beta's bed with Fr Beta lying on his back undressed. He was conscious of the presence of semen on his body but did not know whose it was. He fell asleep while feeling in a state of shock.

He recalled Fr Beta driving him to the bus stop the following morning and as he got out of the car, Fr Beta said to him, "*remember, the both of us wanted it*". This comment, as well as the abuse generally, had a very serious impact on Trevor's life

subsequently and a devastating effect on his relationship with his wife and children.

Fr Beta recalls that Trevor visited him in his own car and therefore did not require a lift to the bus. He says they never discussed what had happened and that he never said "*remember we both wanted it*". The Inquiry is not in a position to adjudicate on such matters of disputed fact.

Trevor sought a meeting with Fr Beta. Fr Beta agreed to this meeting in April 2002. Trevor was accompanied by a social worker and Fr Beta was accompanied by a support priest. Fr Beta admitted that the incident had occurred and apologised for it. Trevor was deeply concerned and traumatised by the manner in which the meeting was conducted and the enquiries which were made subsequently by Fr Beta's support priest who sought to establish whether Trevor was in fact under 18 at the time of the abuse. Trevor maintained that irrespective of his age, the actions of Fr Beta were abusive of a relationship based on trust and integrity.

Trevor sued the Diocese of Ferns and has expressed his dissatisfaction with the litigation process. Part of this dissatisfaction arose from the fact that Fr Beta had admitted the abuse and Trevor therefore believed the diocese should not have engaged in what was for Trevor, a damaging legal wrangle.

The Gardai were informed but no prosecution took place on direction from the DPP because the Garda investigations indicated a discrepancy in the records which showed that Trevor might have been 18 at the time of the incident.

4.8.2 BEN

It is alleged as follows:

Neasa complained to a priest of the Diocese that her son Ben was abused by Fr Beta when he was six years of age. Neasa explained that Fr Beta was babysitting while Neasa and her husband attended a marriage encounter weekend. While she did not specify what the abuse was, Neasa confirmed that Fr Beta did not rape Ben. The diocesan priest immediately reported the complaint to the Bishop Walsh. Fr Denis Brennan, the diocesan delegate wrote to Ben on 22 August 2002, advising that the bishop was anxious to investigate the matter and seeking a meeting with Ben. The complaint does not appear to have proceeded further.

4.9 FR GAMMA

4.9.1 JULIE

Julie alleged the following:

Julie complained of sexual abuse perpetrated by Fr Gamma when she was 9 years of age. Fr Gamma attended her home in the 1970s and on one occasion she

was sitting on a couch in her home when Fr Gamma approached her and sat beside her after telling her mother that he was going to pray over her. Julie had returned from hospital where she had had an operation on her lower abdomen. Fr Gamma put his right hand down inside her clothes and underwear and placed his hand directly onto her vagina. He fondled her and Julie could feel his fingers moving around the vaginal area. She said that she attempted to get up when Fr Gamma pushed the elbow of his arm into her stomach to restrain any movement. She recalls this lasting for approximately 5 minutes. She recalled another incident when she was between 11 and 13 years of age when Fr Gamma called to the house one afternoon whilst she was standing in her kitchen. Fr Gamma stood beside her and put his left arm around her shoulder and proceeded to put his hand under her clothing and fondle her left breast. She stated that Fr Gamma moved his hand and fingers around her left breast and felt her right breast as well. She felt embarrassed and uncomfortable and unable to stop Fr Gamma from touching her. She felt paralysed and frozen due to the fear she had of him. She remembered that her brother who was aged between 13 and 15 years at the time was present but Fr Gamma kept talking to him about general matters to distract him from what he was doing to Julie. She recalled this incident lasting for about 5 minutes. She believes she has blocked out many of her memories of childhood as a result of these instances of abuse. She also recalled an incident involving her younger sister. Fr Gamma attended her house and sat on a chair just inside the kitchen and called her younger sister over to him and started rubbing her legs while she was standing beside him. She recalled herself and her sister mentioning this incident to her mother but her mother dismissed it. At that stage she felt there was no point in discussing any other encounters she had with Fr Gamma with her mother as she would not be believed.

4.9.2 GRACE

Grace alleged the following:

During the early 1970s from 10 to 13 years of age, Grace alleges that she was regularly sexually abused by Fr Gamma. The abuse began when she commenced reading Mass as a fifth class primary student. This would involve her attending Friday afternoon practise sessions at church when she would be required to stand on the pulpit. She remembered being required to wear a dress as all school children wore dresses to school. The first occasion she recalled was when Fr Gamma stood behind her as she practised her reading on the pulpit and leaned over to her to turn the pages of the Bible from which she was reading and proceeded to run his hands up her thighs and up as far as her underwear. He then put his hand inside her underwear and ran it between both of her legs up her thighs. She recalled Fr Gamma fondling her with his hand was inside her underwear for 2 or 3 minutes. She continued reading all of this time. When she finished reading, Fr Gamma stopped. She recalled this occurring approximately 10 times on Friday afternoons. She also recalled Fr Gamma regularly offering to drive her to town after Mass on Sundays and her mother having no difficulty with this arrangement. She said that during such drives Fr Gamma would arrange for her to sit beside him in the front of the car and touch her legs during the drive. She recalled this occurring approximately four times. At 11 years of age, she recalled Fr Gamma attending her house when she was alone and whilst

she was standing in her kitchen, he dropped a small box of matches on the floor at his feet and ordered her to bend down and pick up the matches and come back slowly to him. As she bent down and picked up the matches and attempted to rise up again she was aware that Fr Gamma's penis was exposed. She said it was erect at the time and she does not remember anything else about the incident but believes that he wanted her to perform oral sex. She does not remember if she did so. She recalled a further incident when she was approximately 12 years of age and in first year at the local secondary school when Fr Gamma entered the church which she was attending with her sister and pulled down the top of her dungarees. She felt uncomfortable but nothing else untoward happened. She stated that the abuse stopped after this incident and no abuse occurred from 13 years of age onwards.

Grace has alleged that the abuse had a devastating impact upon her life subsequently and her difficulty in forming relationships. She was afraid at all stages to mention the abuse to any other person and only recently as a result of being hospitalised for a stress-related illness and watching a Prime Time programme on television she has become able to talk about the abuse to members of her family. Grace was also particularly upset that Fr Gamma had performed her wedding ceremony and acted with complete ignorance as to the abuse which he perpetrated against her many years beforehand.

Her brother approached a local priest, and informed him that Grace wished to make a complaint in relation to the abuse by a priest. It was clear from Grace's brother that her allegation referred to a time when she was still a minor and this priest subsequently met with Grace who alleged that she had been sexually abused as a minor by Fr Gamma during his time as curate in a half-parish in the Diocese. This priest informed Grace that he was obliged to pass the information on to An Garda Síochána and he encouraged her to do the same. He offered to arrange a meeting between Grace and Fr Denis Brennan, diocesan delegate for child sexual abuse. He also liaised with a local Garda whom he notified of the complaint and provided diocesan details in the form of Confirmation records of the complainant in order to assist his investigation.

Grace met with Fr Brennan, the diocesan delegate on 1 November 2002 and made a complaint of child sexual abuse against Fr Gamma which had continued for a period of approximately three years in the early 1970s. Grace also made statements of complaint to An Garda Síochána in November 2002 and July 2003.

4.9.3 RUTH

Ruth alleged the following:

A priest of the Diocese explained to Bishop Walsh on 21 May 2003 that a woman named Ruth had told him that Fr Gamma had prepared her marriage papers and on that occasion she vowed she would never be alone with him again. She mentioned that the tone of Fr Gamma's conversation and actions left her very uneasy and she had also heard of a lot of people who had bad experiences with him in the north of

the county. The impression this priest got was that these were young people. In particular, Ruth alleged in a subsequent meeting with Fr Dennis Brennan that when she was walking back to the parochial house from the sacristy, Fr Gamma put his hand around her waist and dug his fingers into her hip bones.

4.9.4 ORLA AND SUSAN

Orla and Susan alleged the following;

A priest of the Diocese contacted Fr John Carroll, the diocesan secretary in late December 2002 in relation to an incident at Wexford General Hospital. A report on the incident was made by a nurse in the intensive care ward to the diocesan delegate who said that Orla, who was a patient in the ward, appeared to suffer a seizure or a fit when approached by Fr Gamma. Orla's sister Susan, was present at the time and informed the nurse that Fr Gamma was not to be allowed near her sister again. Orla and her sister Susan alleged prior sexual impropriety on Fr Gamma's part against each of them. The diocesan delegate, Fr Denis Brennan wrote to Susan on 18 February 2003 seeking a meeting but no response to that letter appears on the diocesan files.

Orla complained to Gardai of child sexual abuse by Fr Gamma in the early 1980s at the vestry of a half-parish in the Diocese during Confirmation preparation exercises when she attended Fr Gamma for Confession. Fr Gamma would sit beside her and always pull her closer to him and proceed to start rubbing her up and down on her arm, shoulders, waist, her backside and her thighs and knees in a continuous motion. She said that Fr Gamma also ran his fingers under her underwear. Orla told her father about the abuse some time later. Fr Gamma called to her house thereafter and her father raised a complaint with Fr Gamma who described Orla as evil. Orla mentioned that three of her friends had also confided in her that they were abused in a similar way by Fr Gamma.

4.9.5 BERNADETTE

Bernadette alleged the following:

During the mid-1970s, when Bernadette was seven or eight years of age, Fr Gamma visited her family home 5 or 6 times a year. During one of those occasions when she was in the kitchen with her sister and mother Fr Gamma sat down on an armchair and put her on his knee and rubbed his hand up and down her thigh. Some time later, he visited again and he put his arm over her shoulders and started rubbing his hand on her shoulder and down her back. On another occasion, she was at home with her sister and mother, and her sister who is almost 2 years older than her was standing at the cooker in front of Fr Gamma who brought her back towards him and put both of his hands down her top and started rubbing his hands around her chest area. Her sister was 9 or 10 years of age at the time. Bernadette first complained about this alleged abuse to the Gardai in 2002.

4.9.6 GRÁINNE

Gráinne alleged the following:

Prior to her wedding ceremony in the mid-1970s, Fr Gamma directed that Gráinne and her husband attend the local church for a pre-marriage talk. When she attended the church, she met with Fr Gamma in the vestry and Fr Gamma asked to speak with her alone. She spoke for a few minutes with Fr Gamma and when this conversation finished and she got up to leave, Fr Gamma put his hand on the door handle effectively blocking her exit. He then put his right hand on her backside and he groped her and told her that she had very small panties on and they must barely have covered her. She told Fr Gamma that her fiancée was outside and he let her go. She left the vestry and Fr Gamma stayed inside. She told her fiancée and father immediately afterwards. She became very upset a few weeks later when Fr Gamma performed the ceremony on her wedding day. She was 19 years old at the time. Gráinne first complained of this abuse in 2002 to the Gardai.

4.9.7 CAROLINE

Caroline alleged the following:

Caroline married in the early 1970s at 16 years of age and at 18 years of age was pregnant with her second child. She was living with her parents at the time. Fr Gamma called to her house and offered to give her a “maternity blessing”. He ordered her to go to her room and he would then attend with her for the blessing. Whilst there, Caroline sat in a chair in her bedroom and Fr Gamma stood to one side of her. He then brought one hand onto her stomach and the other was placed on her head. She could hear him talking lowly and did not know if he was praying. He then brought one hand underneath her bra and she could feel his hand on her breast. He was feeling her breasts for a few seconds and then brought the same hand out from her breasts over her stomach and down to her genital area. He fondled with his fingers around her genital area for a few seconds. He then took away his hand and stopped praying and went to the kitchen to speak to her mother and left. She did not tell her family. She said that Fr Gamma called to her house regularly after that and when she was alone in the house she would not answer the door to him. She said that she only made a statement to An Garda Síochána in July 2003 when she had heard that another person had made a statement of complaint against Fr Gamma.

4.9.8 HILARY

Hilary alleged the following:

In the early 1970s whilst she was in fifth class, Fr Gamma offered Hilary a lift from the church gates to her house and, because of other passengers in the car, she was left with no choice but to take the front seat. During the drive to her house, Fr Gamma squeezed her knee and moved his hand up her leg under her skirt and he touched her underwear but at that stage Hilary pulled away. The next incident she

recalled occurred in the same year when her class was going to Church to do choir practise for Confirmation and she was getting a lift with Fr Gamma. Again, the back of the car was so full that she had no option but to get into the front of the car and when her safety belt became unstuck, Fr Gamma reached across her and caught hold of the safety belt and in the process squeezed her right breast and she then grabbed the belt and told him that she could take care of it. She did not tell her family or teacher about the abuse but confided in a friend at the time. She first spoke about these events to the Gardai in 2003.

4.9.9 DEIRDRE

Deirdre alleged the following:

Deirdre made a statement to An Garda Síochána in December 2002 alleging inappropriate touching on more than one occasion by Fr Gamma when she was a teenager and Fr Gamma was a curate. She did not want to pursue the matter at that stage owing to the fact that her elderly mother was still alive and for other personal reasons. No further detail is known by the Inquiry in respect of this complaint of abuse.

4.9.10 MARIE

Marie alleged the following:

Whilst preparing for her First Holy Communion at approximately 8 years of age in the early 1980s, Marie attended Fr Gamma for Confession. She recalled Fr Gamma appearing at first as very affectionate as he was touching her hair and face and whilst she was kneeling he also stroked the back of her legs. She said he would talk normally as if nothing was happening during this process and would bring his hand directly up her legs to her private parts. She was wearing a skirt and underwear. She remembers him putting his fingers inside her underwear and moving his fingers around her private parts. She said there was no penetration by Fr Gamma on the first occasion. She had presumed that this was the test for Holy Communion. She said there were numerous other times that Fr Gamma heard Confessions in her classroom and the abuse is alleged to have continued up to the time she made her First Holy Communion.

She remembered another time shortly after the incidents described whilst Fr Gamma was hearing her Confession and she was kneeling down beside him and he brought his hand onto her legs and began feeling her legs. She said the touching would always take place at the back of her legs and he brought his hand up to her private parts and put his fingers inside her. She remembered feeling sore, painful and uncomfortable. One incident of penetration took place during the hearing of these Confessions. Marie told her sister about the abuse a number of years later and in 2003 she told her mother about it. Marie later developed an addiction to alcohol, overspending and shoplifting as a result of which she was charged with a criminal offence. She has also attempted suicide on three different occasions. She feels depressed and suicidal on many occasions which she attributes to the abuse experienced by her as a child.. She feels her life is ruined and shattered and she is in heavy financial trouble as a result of her disabilities.

4.10 FR DELTA

4.10.1 BILL

Bill alleged the following:

The Inquiry is aware of a complaint of abuse by Fr Delta made by Bill whilst he, Bill was a pupil in St Peter's College which resulted in a settlement being reached by the alleged victim and Fr Delta. The Inquiry is not aware of any detail of the alleged abuse.

The settlement, but not the details of the complaint, was made known to the Diocese of Ferns. This notification led to Fr Delta's retirement in September, 2002 and his subsequent assessment and treatment. The Diocese notified An Garda Síochána on 11 October 2002, and the South Eastern Health Board on 4 December 2002.

4.10.2 TERRY

Terry alleged the following:

Terry made a complaint against this priest to Fr Denis Brennan, diocesan delegate, on 21 March, 2003. He complained of being sexually abused during the early 1960s while he was a 2nd year student at St Peter's College and Fr Delta was on the staff there. He said the abuse consisted of Fr Delta touching his genital area repeatedly. He did not mention the abuse to anybody until he received counselling in 1999 when he informed the Diocese.

Fr Delta was retired and receiving treatment at this stage. Fr Dennis Brennan notified An Garda Síochána and the South Eastern Health Board by letter dated 15 April 2003.

4.10.3 DES

Des alleged the following:

In the mid 1960s Des, who was over 18 years of age at the time, requested a "Letter of Freedom" from Fr Delta in respect of his forthcoming marriage. On one of several visits to Fr Delta's house, Fr Delta asked Des to unfasten his trousers in order for Fr Delta to check that "everything down there was in working order". Des unbuttoned his trousers and Fr Delta fondled his private parts for approximately ten minutes. Des felt that Fr Delta was attempting to arouse him. This alleged abuse

occurred shortly after Fr Delta had been transferred from a position in St Peter's college at his own request because of incidents of abuse that had occurred with boys there.

Des was deeply traumatised by the incident. He reported the incident to the Diocese on 5 December 2003 whereupon a support person was recommended.

4.10.4 UNIDENTIFIED STUDENTS

The Inquiry is aware of allegations of sexual abuse of secondary school pupils in St Peter's by Fr Delta in the mid-1960s. At Fr Delta's own request, the Bishop of Ferns, Bishop Donal Herlihy removed Fr Delta from his teaching position in the college and appointed him to a curacy in the Diocese. One complainant has indicated to the Inquiry that Bishop Herlihy was aware of allegations he made against Fr Delta at that time.

4.11 FR EPSILON (Deceased)

4.11.1 ANDREW

Andrew alleged the following:

Andrew reported to Bishop Walsh at a meeting on 29 May 2002, several instances of sexual abuse perpetrated against him by the late Fr Epsilon during the early 1960s while he was a student at St Peter's College. Fr Epsilon was a senior member of staff at the time. During his second year, Fr Epsilon asked him to attend his, Fr Epsilon's, room on the pretext of examining his injured leg. In the course of his visit he was stripped naked by Fr Epsilon who touched his groin area repeatedly. He also described another incident where a clerical student sent him and others up to Fr Epsilon's room for punishment. Fr Epsilon told four boys to remove their trousers and he beat them with a billiard cue. This happened on a number of occasions.

The same clerical student was also involved in another incident. He sent Andrew to Fr Epsilon's room for punishment. When he arrived at Fr Epsilon's room, Andrew was blindfolded, fondled and beaten. Fr Epsilon told him that he would act as a doctor. After Andrew left the College Fr Epsilon sent a letter to Andrew asking if he would like to visit the "College doctor". Andrew ignored this invitation and discarded the letter. Andrew believes that he told another priest about the abuse although that priest does not recall such a conversation.

4.11.2 SAM

Sam (see also 4.1.1) alleged the following:

Sam told the Inquiry that on one occasion when he was in study at St Peter's College in the mid-1960s, he was told by Fr Epsilon that there was a researcher at the college from America doing research on the development of boys and that he,

Sam, would be an ideal candidate in terms of age and height. Sam was asked to volunteer and told what room to report to. He went to a room in St Peter's to await the "researcher's" arrival where he was blindfolded, stripped and caned. His penis was measured and he thinks, but cannot be certain, that he was masturbated. Because he was blindfolded during this incident, Sam is not in a position to state categorically that he was abused by Fr Epsilon although he has said to this Inquiry that he is 99% certain that it was him. He said that for years he found it very difficult to believe that Fr Epsilon could have abused him in that way as he was a priest whom Sam held in very high esteem and had admired greatly. These complaints arose some years after the death of Fr Epsilon.

4.12 FR IOTA

4.12.1 PAMELA

Pamela alleged the following:

In the early 1970s when Pamela was 13/14 years of age, Pamela met Fr Iota who was then chaplain to her local youth club. Fr Iota was in his late 20s at that time and an abusive relationship developed between Pamela and Fr Iota over the next number of years which in its latter stages included oral sex and heavy petting but stopped short of penetrative sex. The abuse would take place primarily at St Peter's College. She described how Fr Iota would secretly bring her to his rooms at St Peter's taking care to avoid being detected by anybody during the process. She said that Fr Iota would often appear at her school at the end of the day and drive her directly from school to his rooms at St Peter's College. She stated that Fr Iota used to approach her and direct her to sit on his knee whilst he had an erection. She said that Fr Iota had said to her repeatedly that he wished to marry her. When she was approximately 15 years of age she disclosed this abusive relationship with Fr Iota to a local curate, Fr Kappa, as it was causing her great distress. She is unsure as to whether or not Fr Kappa reported her complaint to any other authority.

The abuse by Fr Iota continued. Approximately one year after she had complained to Fr Kappa, a meeting was arranged and attended by Fr Kappa, for the purpose of requesting Fr Iota to desist from further abuse. Fr Iota told Pamela at this meeting that he did not want to marry her and he would not leave the priesthood because of his relationship with her. For Pamela the purpose of the meeting had been to persuade Fr Iota to end the abuse which was causing her great distress.

Shortly after her meeting with Fr Iota and Fr Kappa, Pamela attempted to commit suicide by taking an overdose of antidepressant tablets. She attended St Patrick's Hospital in Dublin for medical treatment immediately after her suicide attempt and believes that the cost of such treatment may have been discharged by the Diocese of Ferns.

Pamela stated that she had disclosed what was happening with Fr Iota to her General Practitioner and was prescribed antidepressants following such notification which she subsequently used in her suicide attempt. This doctor has informed the Inquiry that he

spoke to Bishop Herlihy about the situation after the suicide attempt and advised him to do something about it.

Fr Iota was transferred out of the parish after Pamela's suicide attempt and diocesan records show that a letter from Bishop Herlihy to the Cardinal at Westminster cites the reason for Fr Iota's departure as follows;

"Father Iota had some involvement with a girl, which is now happily terminated. As a result, he is anxious and has been advised to spend some time away from this diocese. He is a gentle refined young man, but has always demanded understanding and sympathy."

Pamela has suffered greatly as a result of the abuse.

Pamela contacted the acting diocesan delegate in May 2005 and reported being abused by Fr Iota whilst she was a child. She sought details of any information contained on diocesan files in relation to her. She also indicated to the Delegate that she was abused by a second priest but did not provide any details in relation to that abuse. She has stated to the Inquiry that she felt pressurised into making a written statement detailing the abuse. The Diocese was in the position of having to report this allegation to the Inquiry in circumstances where its work was nearing completion and therefore a formal complaint was seen as important. She was reluctant to do provide a written complaint and consulted the One-in-Four organisation who requested that all future communication with Pamela would be conducted through their office.

4.13 FR KAPPA

4.13.1 PAMELA

Pamela alleged the following:

Pamela reported to Fr Kappa in the early 1970s, her abusive relationship with Fr Iota, and a close relationship developed between Fr Kappa and Pamela thereafter. When Pamela was aged approximately 17 years, she was abused by Fr Kappa who regularly supplied her with alcoholic drink. She said that the abuse commenced through kissing and hugging and later developed into full sexual intercourse which took place when she was 18 years of age. She recalled one incident when she was supplied with a lot of alcohol and brought back to a chalet opposite a local church and she awoke the following morning in Fr Kappa's bed. She said this was the first occasion in which she did not spend the night at home. Pamela became pregnant very shortly after sexual intercourse with Fr Kappa had commenced and she believes her child was fathered by Fr Kappa.

When she became pregnant it was arranged by Fr Kappa that she would be sent to a family in a different county where she would work at general cleaning and typing duties until she gave birth and her child would then be placed for adoption. Fr Kappa had also orchestrated an arrangement whereby she would write letters that would in turn be passed to an Irish priest in Rome and posted from there to her father and employer in Wexford. She said that this was aimed at creating an impression that she

was working as an *au pair* in Rome. However, she left this residence after a short while and travelled to London.

Pamela eventually returned home to give birth to her child. Fr Kappa refused to recognise Pamela's child as his own.

Pamela has suffered greatly as a result of such abuse and has attended a stress counsellor at the advice of a medical consultant in recent times.

Pamela contacted the acting diocesan delegate, in May 2005, and reported being abused by two priests but she did not name Fr Kappa or provide any details in relation to abuse by him.

4.14 FR LAMDA

4.14.1 JONATHON

Jonathon alleged the following:

In a letter dated 5 November 1996 sent to Bishop Comiskey, Jonathon who was then working abroad, stated to Bishop Comiskey; "I had been struggling for a long time with bouts of terrible depression – some of which you may know about, but all of which hardly anyone knows. In trying to reach to the roots of this, following counselling, I feel free to admit that I too am a victim of abuse as an altar boy – by a priest of the Diocese (now deceased!). He was a dear friend of my parents. An "adopted uncle". "Our Sponsor" during college days (when fees were obligatory!) so it was unthinkable that one could complain. All I knew was that I hated his behaviour but just buried the experiences."

Jonathon went on to state in this letter that his counsellor would write directly to Bishop Comiskey and this counsellor was free to share with the Bishop whatever he felt like sharing. Jonathon spoke with the Inquiry but did not wish to elaborate on this matter.

4.15 FR ZETA (deceased)

4.15.1 Anonymous Complaint.

It was alleged as follows:

In March 1996, the Diocese of Ferns received an anonymous letter accusing a priest in a named parish of committing sexual offences against school boys in the local Primary School in the years in the late 1980s. The letter did not identify the priest

other than to say that he was still in the named parish. Fr William Cosgrave, the diocesan delegate said that one of the priests serving in the named parish had served there for some time and had been chaplain and confessor to the pupils of the local Primary School for many years. He therefore believed that the anonymous letter referred to this Priest who is named by the Inquiry as Fr Zeta. Fr Zeta was still alive at the time of this complaint but no investigation of it took place. He has since died.

4.15.2 Primary School Complaint.

The Inquiry spoke with a former school teacher at a primary school in the diocese who taught at that school when Fr Zeta was chaplain and confessor there. He said that Fr Zeta had a practice of hearing the Confession of young boys in the staff room of the school and on one occasion when he attended the staff room he saw Fr Zeta with a young boy on his knee. Fr Zeta abruptly pushed the boy off when the school teacher entered the room. The matter was subsequently reported at a staff meeting but according to this teacher was dismissed by a member of the religious order who occupied a senior position in the school at that time. This member of a religious order has been the subject of allegations of child sexual abuse received by this Inquiry although such allegations could not be investigated as they did not come within the Terms of Reference. Notwithstanding this reaction, the teacher's reporting of the incident to the meeting appeared to have resulted in no more Confessions being heard by Fr Zeta in the staff room.

The teacher told the Inquiry that Fr Zeta would visit the school and catch young boys under the arms and ask them silly and often inappropriate questions. He was told by one young boy that Fr Zeta had asked him how often he masturbated.

4.16 FR SIGMA (Deceased)

4.16.1 BREDA

Breda alleged the following:

Breda complained of sexual abuse perpetrated on her by Fr Sigma in Monageer and Knock in the late 1970s for a four year period commencing when she was 8 years old. She recalled that Fr Sigma came into her house and he sat her up on his knee putting his hand up her skirt.

Breda telephoned Fr Tommy Brennan, diocesan secretary, in September 1996 and told him that she had been sexually abused by Fr Sigma when she was a young girl. She informed Fr Brennan that she was in counselling at that time and had a mental block surrounding the events of her life before the age of 12 or 13 years. Fr Brennan wrote to Bishop Comiskey in December 1997 with a memorandum of the telephone conversation with the then unidentified Breda.

Breda told the Inquiry that there were lots of rumours surrounding Fr Sigma throughout the parish, mainly concerning girls. She is aware of other women in counselling as a result of child sexual abuse by this priest. She was in counselling and needed financial help in order to continue it and a limited period of counselling was paid for by the Diocese.

Breda recalled an incident of abuse which occurred when she was staying in Fr Sigma's house with her family including her two sisters. Fr Sigma took her into his bed and raped her. She said that the following night she pretended to be asleep until she saw him approach one of her sisters at which point she let him know she was awake in order to prevent her sister from suffering the abuse she had suffered the previous night. She got into bed with him where further abuse occurred. Breda attempted suicide on a few occasions and suffered great difficulty with self-esteem as a result of the abuse.

Fr Brennan received a letter from Bishop Comiskey stating; *"At last I have my fears or suspicions confirmed. I always thought that there were some unsavoury undercurrents to the allegations of sexual abuse in Monageer. I am saddened but not surprised by this woman's revelations."*

Bishop Comiskey could not explain to the Inquiry why he wrote those words and does not recall any specific allegations about Fr Sigma. He said he must have heard something at the time which he cannot now recall.

Fr Brennan was contacted in December 1997 by a financial advisor to Breda who said she suffered serious financial problems largely due to her ongoing attendance at counselling sessions because of the abuse. Fr Brennan arranged for the discharge of outstanding counselling fees for approximately ten sessions on behalf of the diocese. After completion of her counselling sessions, Breda did not have further contact with the diocese although she is still in counselling today. Fr Sigma was deceased at the time this allegation was made.

4.17 FR UPSILON

4.17.1 DENIS

Denis alleged the following:

Denis alleged abuse by Fr Upsilon over an eight year period in the late 1970s and early 1980s to a social worker from the East Coast Area Health Board in 1998. The East Coast Area Health Board informed the South Eastern Health Board, which in turn informed the Gardaí. Denis subsequently made a statement to Gardaí withdrawing the allegation of abuse. Gardaí notified the South Eastern

Health Board that, in light of this withdrawal, they could not proceed with the matter. The SEHB contacted the East Coast Area Health Board who tried to trace Denis but to no avail. The Diocese was made aware of this complaint by this Inquiry in 2004. Fr Upsilon was asked by Bishop Eamonn Walsh to stand down from his ministry pending further investigation and he did this.

4.18 FR THETA (Deceased)

4.18.1 DON

Don alleged the following:

Fr Theta was a curate in the Diocese and knew Don's mother. Following an accident in which Don broke his leg, Fr Theta suggested that Don should attend Lourdes with him. Don was 14 years of age at this time. Fr Theta paid for the trip. On the way back they stayed in a Dublin hotel. Fr Theta booked a twin room for them and pushed the two beds together. When Don got into bed Fr Theta started to kiss him on the mouth but stopped when Don turned away from him. Don believes that Fr Theta was attempting to rape him and has stated that he has suffered from depression and has needed counselling as a result.

Don told the Inquiry that he informed the Diocese of this incident in 2003, after the death of Fr Theta. No action could therefore be taken other than to provide Don with support. The Diocese has done this and Sr. Helen O'Riordan meets with Don regularly. Don has expressed himself as satisfied with the support extended to him by the Diocese.

4.19 FR OMIKRON

4.19.1 JENNY

Jenny alleged the following:

In order to assess a medical condition, Jenny's doctors suggested that a photograph be taken at regular intervals and sent to him. This occurred during the 1950s. Because Fr Omikron was a family friend and had an interest in photography, Jenny's mother asked him to take the photographs and was present during the sessions.

Jenny was completely naked while the photos were taken. She stated that the experience was loaded with sexual pressure for her and although Fr Omikron

remained a close family friend he never talked to her from then on. She later identified the contrast in having such photos taken by a medical specialist who did not require her to be naked and who did not make her feel embarrassed.

She first told the diocesan delegate about this experience in 2000 and she alleged that the events had a marked effect on her life as she carried the belief that she was at fault. She said the guilt also affected her professional life. She attended counselling for substantial periods of her adult life.

Jenny believes that the handling of her complaint by Bishop Comiskey exacerbated any injury or damage which she suffered as a result of the abuse.

Jenny took issue with Bishop Comiskey not offering to discharge fully all treatment costs incurred by her up to the date of her complaint and also his reluctance to offer an apology on behalf of the Diocese. Bishop Comiskey explained that he could not offer an apology on behalf of a priest who was deceased and he paid IR£4,000.00 towards counselling costs when a sum of IR£4,400.00 was sought.

Bishop Walsh discharged the full cost of Jenny's counselling fees and apologised to her for the abuse she suffered. Jenny wrote to Fr Denis Brennan, diocesan delegate, in August 2002 and expressed herself satisfied with Bishop Walsh's response.

Fr Omikron was long since deceased when this allegation was first made to the Diocese.

4.20 FR TAU (Deceased)

4.20.1 KIERAN

Kieran alleged the following:

It was alleged by Kieran (4.5.22) that when he reported an allegation of sexual abuse against Fr Fortune to Fr Tau, Fr Tau himself abused Kieran by requiring him to demonstrate what Fr Fortune had done to him and by touching his penis. Kieran immediately rebuked such an advance. Kieran told the Inquiry that Fr Tau eventually apologised to Kieran for what had occurred and assured him that he had reported the matter to Bishop Comiskey. No record of this complaint exists on the diocesan files which the Inquiry has seen.

4.21 FR OMEGA

4.21.1 UNIDENTIFIED BOY AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOL COMPLAINT.

It is alleged as follows:

On 20 October 1994, a teacher informed the local Public Health Nurse of a 14 year old boy who was not attending school, was isolated and who had befriended a local curate. The Nurse made a child abuse notification. The Director of Community Care (DCC) for the South Eastern Health Board discussed the curate with the Principal of a local school and discovered that the priest had been transferred from the school in the late 1980s because he had shown what were considered to be inappropriate pictures to children in the course of sex education classes. The DCC reported this to the Gardai who interviewed the boy's mother. She was content with the relationship between her son and the priest and was satisfied that nothing untoward had occurred or was occurring between them. The diocese became aware of these matters in 2004 following notification by this Inquiry. Fr Omega was asked to stand aside from active ministry and to attend a psychologist for assessment to explore any boundary issues which he might have. He agreed to do so.

UNNAMED PRIESTS

AA and BB

Both AA and BB made complaints in relation to the conduct of priests identified by them. Both complainants felt deeply about matters which troubled them over a period of years and in relation to which they wrote extensively to the diocese. Their complaints were made known to the Gardai by the Bishop. The correspondence was considered by the Inquiry and it is satisfied that the diocese and the Gardai were justified in taking no further action in relation to either complaint. The Inquiry believes it would be unfair to the priest and hurtful to the complainants to analyse here the complaints made.