

Introduction

33.1 Fr Quinton is a member of a religious order. He was born in 1935 and ordained in 1960. He worked abroad for a number of years and then returned to Ireland. He was involved in formation, retreat and vocation work on behalf of his order for a number of years and spent some time studying abroad. He worked in the Archdiocese of Dublin from 1985 to 1992.

33.2 There are two allegations of child sexual abuse against Fr Quinton. These have not been proven or admitted but concerns remain about his suitability for public ministry. He has not been exercising public ministry since 1999. He lives in one of the order's houses and may engage in internal ministry only.

33.3 There is written evidence from 1978 that there had been some difficulties between Fr Quinton and his students when he was involved in formation work with the order. This does not show any evidence of difficulties relating to sexual abuse. However, it emerged in 1996 that there were concerns about inappropriate sexual behaviour with students.

Appointment to Archdiocese

33.4 In September 1984, Fr Quinton applied to Bishop Carroll (who was in charge of the Archdiocese of Dublin at the time) asking to be appointed to a specific parish in the Archdiocese for a year. He had already received permission from the head of his order. This application was treated in the normal way. It was referred to the Advisory Committee on Extra-Diocesan Priests. The committee agreed to consider him for a parish appointment. The head of his order told Bishop Kavanagh that he was a priest in good standing. The head of the order also said that Fr Quinton wanted to work in a parish "*in order to assume more personal responsibility for his life. In recent years he has experienced difficulties in living in community life. However, he has sought direction and counselling in these matters*". Bishop Carroll accepted him for a temporary appointment in the Archdiocese of Dublin and, in February 1985, he was appointed temporary curate until summer 1985. In

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This is a pseudonym.

fact, he stayed there beyond that time and, in May 1986, he applied for a further extension of a year. This was approved in July 1986. In 1987, Bishop Carroll noted that he had heard high praise from the parish priest about Fr Quinton's work. In 1988, he applied for and was granted a three-year extension, that is, until 1991. He continued in his position when this period expired.

Complaint

33.5 In 1991, a young man with an intellectual disability who was working in a sheltered workshop run by the St John of God Hospitaller Services told the workshop manager that he had been sexually abused by a priest while he was staying in a hostel for young people. Fr Quinton used to visit the hostel but was not formally appointed to it. The workshop manager told the manager of the hostel and she also reported to Dr Patrick Walsh who was the director of psychological services in the St John of God order and had responsibility for ensuring that child protection policies within the order were carried out. The young man, who was aged 20 at this time, told Dr Walsh that the abuse had started when he was about 15 or 16. He alleged that the abuse had started with seductive behaviour towards him in the hostel. This was followed by oral sex in the priest's home. He also alleged that Fr Quinton had given him money from time to time. The young man told a similar story to the manager of the hostel.

33.6 The hostel manager informed the parish priest of the allegation and the parish priest told Bishop Murray, who was the area bishop. He told Bishop Murray that a psychologist thought there was "*something in it*". Bishop Murray informed Monsignor Stenson. Bishop Murray spoke to Fr Quinton who denied the allegations. Fr Quinton said that the young man used to visit him in his house, they listened to music and watched videos and he did give him a "*few quid*" on occasions. The young man's brother had come to his house on a number of occasions and made allegations against him.

33.7 Bishop Murray then spoke to the hostel manager. The hostel manager told Bishop Murray that he was convinced that it was the young man's own story and he was not being put up to it by his brother. The hostel manager had "*grilled*" the young man twice and his story was consistent with

what he had told Dr Walsh. The manager had also spoken to Fr Quinton, who had denied the allegation and said that no such accusation had ever been made to him (even though he told Bishop Murray that the brother had made such an allegation).

33.8 Bishop Murray spoke to Dr Walsh, who advised that, even though the complainant was an adult, the health board should be informed because he had an intellectual disability. They agreed that Dr Walsh would meet Fr Quinton.

33.9 Bishop Murray met the head of the order. The head told him that Fr Quinton had a poor relationship with him and with the authorities of the order but that there had been no sex abuse issues. Bishop Murray told Fr Quinton to see Dr Walsh and he agreed. Bishop Murray also told him to stay out of the parish for a period. Dr Walsh met Fr Quinton. Dr Walsh did not consider he was meeting him in order to carry out an assessment but Bishop Murray seems to have considered that was the case. Dr Walsh saw his role as dealing with a child protection concern within the St John of God services. He told the Commission that Fr Quinton understood his role. The Archdiocese usually referred priests against whom child sexual abuse allegations had been made to Dr Walsh for assessment. The Commission accepts that Dr Walsh saw his role as dealing with a child protection concern within his employment but considers that he should have explained this clearly to Bishop Murray and should have not become involved in reporting to Bishop Murray or anyone else in the Archdiocese or the order about the alleged abuser. His subsequent reports and advice to Bishop Murray, while they may not constitute a formal psychological assessment, do include assessments of Fr Quinton.

33.10 Dr Walsh reported to Bishop Murray that he was quite certain that Fr Quinton was not a paedophile but that he had blurred the boundaries of appropriate behaviour.

33.11 In a report compiled in January 1992, Dr Walsh concluded that there was a ring of truth to the allegation. He said that Fr Quinton staunchly denied the allegation. He described the priest as a "*pugnacious*" person who had a history of being in dispute with his superiors in the order but "*inquiries there*

indicate that they never had any suspicions of homosexuality or sexual deviations”.

33.12 In March 1992, having been notified of the matter by Dr Walsh, the director of community care in the health board convened a case conference. This was attended by Dr Walsh and a number of social workers. The case conference concluded that it was impossible to “*confirm or refute the allegations*”. The health board considered that the hostel manager had acted responsibly and there was no contact between current residents of the hostel and Fr Quinton.

33.13 Dr Walsh reported to Bishop Murray about the case conference and his own dealings with Fr Quinton. He reported that Fr Quinton had denied the allegations. Dr Walsh understood from Fr Quinton that these were the first allegations of their kind against him and, as they were unsubstantiated, he could not ask him to receive treatment. He did not believe Fr Quinton was a risk but he should be warned that his relationship with the complainant was inappropriate. He also recommended that Fr Quinton have a change of duties. If he was to be allocated parish work, the parish priest should be made aware of the allegations and that he should be careful about any involvement with residential homes for children or young people.

End of Archdiocese appointment

33.14 In April 1992, Fr Quinton sought a further year’s extension to his appointment to the Archdiocese of Dublin (his existing appointment had already formally expired in July 1991). Monsignor Stenson advised Archbishop Connell to withhold his consent. He pointed out that, according to Canon 693 of the code of canon law: “*If the member is a cleric the indult¹⁰¹ is not granted until he has found a bishop who will incardinate him in his diocese or at least receive him there on probation. If he is received on probation, he is by virtue of the law itself incardinated in the diocese after five years, unless the bishop has rejected him*”. Monsignor Stenson pointed out that Fr Quinton could argue that he was received on probation in the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1985 (seven years earlier) and was, therefore, automatically incardinated (see Chapter 3). However, he thought the more correct view was that Fr

¹⁰¹ An indult of exlaustration is the canon law procedure used when a member of a religious order leaves the order to work in a parish.

Quinton remained a member of his order. Monsignor Stenson was concerned that the time for incardination would run from 1988 and it was, therefore, important that no automatic incardination be allowed. Fr Quinton was granted a retrospective extension of a year which meant that his appointment would end in mid 1992. The Archbishop made it very clear that Fr Quinton could continue in ministry in the Archdiocese until then but that he would not be willing to incardinate him permanently into the diocese. Fr Quinton was released from his diocesan duties as planned.

33.15 It would appear that the complaint was the main reason for the unwillingness to incardinate Fr Quinton. However, there were indications that he was a somewhat difficult personality and this may have been a factor. The order seems to have believed that the complaint was the main factor. The Archdiocese is not obliged under canon law to give reasons for its refusal.

Attempts to rejoin the Archdiocese

33.16 Immediately after he ceased working in the Archdiocese in mid 1992, Fr Quinton's superior wrote to Archbishop Connell saying that Fr Quinton wished to continue working in the Archdiocese. He proposed that Fr Quinton would continue to live within the order but would be available full time for archdiocesan duties. Bishop Murray was consulted and he recognised that there was a risk in such an arrangement. The Archdiocese was aware that there were unresolved issues in Fr Quinton's relationship with his order but did not know exactly what these were.

33.17 Fr Quinton was not allowed back to the Archdiocese but no formal decision to that effect was issued. He remained within his order but his request for a return remained in place.

33.18 In 1995, at the request of the order, Dr Walsh saw Fr Quinton and issued a report on the complaint made by the young man. He had offered the young man and his brother a number of appointments in order to establish what exactly was being alleged and they had not pursued the matter. He concluded that the matter should be brought to a close as the case had been effectively dropped because it was never substantiated and should consequently not have any bearing on Fr Quinton's future life or work. Bishops Murray and Walsh were informed of the report. Bishop Murray told

the Commission that he had no further dealings with the case as he was appointed Bishop of Limerick in March 1996. The St John of God order continued to support the young man in its sheltered workshop until his death in 2007.

Rumours and suspicions

33.19 In March 1996, the head of the order reported that he had met Fr Quinton to discuss the allegations against him. He wanted to bring the allegations “*to a conclusion*”. He also spoke to Fr Quinton about the rumours of improper behaviour which allegedly took place while he was master of students in the early 1970s. This was the first time that a member of the order had raised these rumours with Fr Quinton. At a meeting with the Granada Institute these rumours/innuendos were discussed. The conclusion reached was that the rumours from the 1970s could not be substantiated and the two brothers involved in the 1991 complaint would not be credible witnesses. The head of the order then wrote to Archbishop Connell saying that he, Fr Quinton and Dr Walsh had met and “*all matters relating to the allegations made ... were thoroughly discussed*”. He enclosed a separate letter which included the information about the rumours from the time Fr Quinton was a master of students. This separate letter does not seem to have been received by the Archdiocese. It is not in the archdiocesan files and Monsignor Stenson did not refer at all to these rumours when he next dealt with the subject of Fr Quinton. The head of the order expressed the wish that “*this will bring the matter to a successful conclusion*”.

33.20 In August 1996, the order proposed that Fr Quinton be appointed to one of the parishes for which it had responsibility in the Archdiocese. It appears that the priest had been exercising ministry at an oratory in the Archdiocese.

33.21 Monsignor Stenson recommended to Archbishop Connell that he not accept the appointment of Fr Quinton to the parish run by the order and the Archbishop did not do so. Monsignor Stenson argued that just because the victim and his brother did not pursue the matter with Granada did not itself establish that no incidents had occurred. Although the allegations remained unsubstantiated they were never withdrawn and were never canonically investigated.

33.22 Monsignor Stenson suggested to the head of the order that a canonical investigation be held into the allegations. The head of the order told Monsignor Stenson that Fr Quinton was living in one of the order's houses and occasionally helped out in an oratory. Monsignor Stenson said this involved exercising ministry in the diocese and the Archbishop would not be happy with that. The head then mentioned the rumours/innuendos but said he could not provide details. Monsignor Stenson noted "*I thought it was an interesting revelation*". The head of the order told Dr Walsh of the intention to hold a canonical investigation.

33.23 In September 1996, Dr Walsh provided another report to the head of the order. This contained very detailed information about the 1991 complainant which he had obtained in the course of his investigation on behalf of the St John of God order and contained the same analysis as the previous reports. It did not mention the rumours/innuendos of which Dr Walsh was aware. This report was also provided to the Archdiocese. After examining the report, the head of the order and his canon lawyer agreed that a canonical investigation was unnecessary when a thorough investigation of the case had already been carried out in 1992 by the health board.

33.24 In April 1997, Archbishop Connell said that if Fr Quinton was to be allowed a diocesan appointment, the details of his case must be considered by the advisory panel. Fr Quinton agreed to this. The advisory panel recommended that Fr Quinton be comprehensively assessed by a psychologist other than Dr Walsh and that further inquiries be made of the parish priest. If the result of these actions was satisfactory, the panel considered that Fr Quinton could be appointed to one of his order's parishes in the diocese. They recommended that he should not be reappointed in isolation from his order as had happened in his earlier appointment.

33.25 Monsignor Stenson then effectively carried out his own investigation – he spoke to the parish priest and to the hostel manager. The hostel manager told him that he considered there was a ring of truth about the allegations. Monsignor Stenson was impressed by this man and considered that his "*opinion should not be discounted lightly*".

33.26 In July 1997, the Archbishop was concerned to discover that Fr Quinton was involved with a youth group; he discovered this from a magazine. The head of the order told Fr Quinton to cease this involvement and reported to Monsignor Stenson that he (the head of the order) had not been asked for Fr Quinton's services nor had Fr Quinton been given permission for this involvement.

Another complaint, 1998

33.27 In August 1998, a former student for the priesthood reported to the order about events that had occurred in 1972/3 when Fr Quinton was in charge of the students. This particular student had reported to another member of the order that Fr Quinton was abusing a young boy. He claimed that he knew the abuse was occurring "*for a fact*" but nothing was done about it. Shortly after this he was asked to leave the order.

33.28 After some time, he revealed the name of the victim and that he had reported in 1973 to a number of members of the order. The order has told the Commission that concerns were expressed to two members of the order at the time. One has been dead for many years but the other recalls being approached by this man and concerns being expressed about Fr Quinton's relationship with students. Concern was expressed in relation to one student in particular but no specific allegation of abuse was made. Fr Quinton, as well as being in charge of students, was also in a position of authority within the order. The order member to whom the concerns were expressed did not report the matter further. This seems to the Commission to have been due, partly at least, to the position Fr Quinton had in the order. The order has told the Commission that it is no longer possible for the person in charge of students to be in such a position of authority.

33.29 In September 1998, a member of the order who had been a novice in the early 1970s noted that Fr Quinton had a reputation among novices of being sexually disinhibited in his contact with them and was prone to sexual "*acting out*". This was made known to Granada and is mentioned in the report which was issued in November 1998.

33.30 In November 1998, another Granada psychologist issued a report on Fr Quinton. As well as a personality analysis, this showed that Fr Quinton

had been alienated from the authority structures in the order for many years. Fr Quinton was sceptical about the assessment and his life as a priest in general. He denied the allegation of sexual assault and reported no erotic interest in males. The report noted that Fr Quinton had gravitated towards ministry with younger adults over the years and had enjoyed relating to young adults more than older groups. While Fr Quinton denied any sexual misconduct, it was possible that a person with his profile could break other boundaries including sexual boundaries.

33.31 The report concluded that Fr Quinton was not amenable to therapeutic intervention due to his bitterness and resentment but should the allegations be clarified, he might agree to attend a therapeutic programme.

33.32 The order decided to pursue the complaints made by novices in the 1970s. The allegations do not seem to have been put to Fr Quinton. In fact, he seems to have heard of them only when he got the Granada report just before he went abroad. The specific allegation of abuse does not seem to have been investigated further nor was it put to Fr Quinton.

33.33 Fr Quinton was helping out in a parish at weekends at this time.

Withdrawal from ministry

33.34 In January 1999, due to the inconclusive allegations against Fr Quinton, his involvement with the youth group, the Archbishop's discomfort with him ministering in the Archdiocese and the repeated concerns expressed over the years about his relationship with young adult men, the head of the order asked him to have an assessment carried out. Fr Quinton went to a therapeutic facility abroad for this assessment. A report was issued in February 1999.

33.35 This report shows that, for the first time, Fr Quinton admitted that he became aware of his homosexuality in his early 20s. He denied any activity with others. It was recommended that he participate in a residential programme in order to address psychosexual issues and that he remain out of ministry until such a programme was completed.

33.36 Fr Quinton was unwilling to take part in such a programme. The order withdrew him from ministry because of his failure to comply with this recommendation. The order reported all of this to the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese would not allow him to undertake any public ministry until his difficulties were addressed. Fr Quinton was referred to a psychotherapist by Dr Walsh. This therapist seems to have acted as an intermediary between him and the order. In November 1999, he reported that Fr Quinton had attended 16 sessions and that he had not seen anything that would indicate a danger of sexually abusing children during the course of his ministry. However, this therapist clearly heard only Fr Quinton's version of events and he was under the impression that the 1991 allegation against Fr Quinton was "*without substance*". He does not seem to have been aware of the concerns in relation to the 1970s.

33.37 Many meetings were held within the order with Fr Quinton to try to resolve the impasse. Fr Quinton argued that he was being considered guilty and invoked canon law. The order consulted its canon lawyer who took the view that removing the priest from public ministry could not be regarded as automatically damaging his lawful good name and reputation and referred to canon 682.2 which states that no religious has a right to a pastoral assignment and can be removed from office.

33.38 The order did try to find suitable work for him. The delegate for the order investigated the rumours/innuendos relating to the 1970s. The main complaints were not related to sexual abuse but there were allegations that Fr Quinton was over friendly with some students and there was excessive drinking in the seminary.

33.39 The specific complaint about sexual abuse of a young student does not seem to have been further investigated. This complaint was not made known to the Archdiocese.

33.40 The problem remained that an allegation had been made and not withdrawn. It was impossible to prove or disprove it. Nevertheless, it was clear that both the hostel manager and Dr Walsh considered that there was something in it. There were also concerns about Fr Quinton's relationship with young men. The report from the overseas therapeutic facility is clear that

Fr Quinton needed residential treatment to deal with psychosexual issues and that he should not be in ministry until this was completed. Fr Quinton refused to take such treatment. The impasse remains. His psychotherapist, whom he had been attending for six years, recommended in 2006 that he should be allowed public ministry.

The Commission's assessment

- 33.41 The woman in charge of the sheltered workshop is to be commended for her prompt and caring response. The hostel manager also dealt well with the matter and ensured that Fr Quinton did not have further access to the hostel. The health board did not report to the Gardaí. The Commission considers that it should have done so even though the complainant was an adult at the time. He was an adult with an intellectual disability and so the health board acted appropriately in organising a case conference.
- 33.42 The Commission considers that the Archdiocese was correct in not allowing Fr Quinton back into ministry as serious concerns remain over his behaviour. It is also clear from his involvement in the therapeutic facility abroad that he was less than candid in his dealings with the Church authorities and Granada.
- 33.43 The order does not seem to have thoroughly addressed the complaint about specific sexual abuse in the 1970s. The order did have a problem in finding suitable activities for Fr Quinton who clearly was disenchanted with the order but chose to remain in it.
- 33.44 The Commission is concerned about the role of Dr Walsh in this case. The Commission recognises that Dr Walsh dealt appropriately with the complaint in his role within the St John of God order. However, he should have made it clear to Bishop Murray and to the order that this was how he saw his role. The Commission considers that he should have taken no further part in assessing Fr Quinton because of the potential conflict of interest between the interests of the young man and the interests of the alleged abuser. Dr Walsh does not accept that there was any conflict of interest.

33.45 Communication between the order and the Archdiocese was reasonable in this case. However, neither the Archdiocese nor the order seems to have adverted to the fact that Fr Quinton's original appointment to the Archdiocese had ended and was allowed to continue without specific sanction. In fact, the Archdiocese nearly allowed Fr Quinton to become incardinated by default.