

Introduction

37.1 Fr Terentius is a member of a religious order. He was born in the 1930s and ordained in the 1960s. He was a curate in the Archdiocese of Dublin in the 1970s and 1980s. He served as a missionary for a number of years both before and after his time in the Archdiocese. He also worked publicly in Ireland on behalf of his order for a number of years before complaints were made.

37.2 The Commission is aware of three complaints of child sexual abuse in respect of his time in the Archdiocese of Dublin. Two of these complaints were made within one month of each other in late 1994 - this appears to be entirely coincidental but may be linked to the furore caused by the Brendan Smyth affair. One complaint was made directly to the order and the other was made initially to the Archdiocese. The third complaint was made in 1998 but the alleged victim did not personally make this complaint. In the course of dealing with these complaints, Fr Terentius admitted to “*a series of incidents*” involving a total of six boys, starting in 1960 and including incidents while on the missions. His therapist was of the view that there were probably “*loads*” of victims.

37.3 Fr Terentius has been living under strict supervision within the order since the complaints were made.

First complaint, 1994

37.4 The first complaint was made to the order¹⁰⁶ in November 1994 by the sister of the victim. She said the abuse occurred when her brother (who was now in his late 20s) was about 13 or 14 years old. Fr Terentius was well known to her family and was trusted by them. He had brought the young boy and another boy on a trip. Subsequently Fr Terentius asked the boy to help him in his house. The boy was reluctant to go but his parents insisted that he

¹⁰⁵ This is a pseudonym.

¹⁰⁶ The complaints were dealt with by the head of the order in Ireland and/or the delegate appointed to deal with child abuse. The term “head of the order” or the “order” is used throughout to describe those in authority who were dealing with the complaints.

go. Fr Terentius gave him dinner and alcohol. The boy was sick and Fr Terentius brought him to his (the priest's) bed where he abused him.

37.5 At this stage the victim was not aware that a complaint was being made. His sister wanted to be sure that Fr Terentius did not have access to children but did not want anything else done.

37.6 The head of the order briefed the superior of the house where Fr Terentius was living and asked him to supervise. Fr Terentius was ill at the time so the matter was not put to him immediately. At this time, the order, like most other Church and State institutions, had no procedure in place, other than that specified in canon law, for dealing with such complaints but it immediately set about putting one in place. The order reported the complaint to Monsignor Alex Stenson, the chancellor of the Archdiocese of Dublin, who told the order that he made inquiries of the area bishop and there was nothing further to report.

37.7 In December 1994, the sister told the victim that she had made the complaint. He then wanted to meet the order and see what kind of help he could get. He did not want to press charges.

37.8 The superior and other senior members of the order met Fr Terentius and told him of the complaint. Fr Terentius admitted that one incident of child sexual abuse had occurred. The order was in the process of dealing with this complaint when the second complaint came to light.

Second Complaint

37.9 The second complaint was made in December 1994 to the Archdiocese of Dublin by the victim and his mother. Monsignor Stenson met them and made a detailed note of the meeting. The complainant was an altar boy in the church to which Fr Terentius was attached when he was serving in the Archdiocese. The abuse took place when the boy was about 13-14 years old (around 1977). The abuse occurred in Fr Terentius's house and involved hugging, embracing and fondling of private parts. The boy escaped because the telephone rang. On the day following the abusive incident, he told his mother what had happened. She confronted Fr Terentius who responded "*I was drunk*". She did not accept this. Some days later she suggested to Fr

Terentius that he go and see a charismatic priest with whom she was familiar. She also spoke to this priest and asked that “*the specific matter be dealt with*”. He confirmed that they had discussed “*the matter*”. The mother suspected that there were other victims in the parish and she provided the name of a family. Both the complainant and his mother said they would be willing to confront Fr Terentius.

37.10 Monsignor Stenson advised the complainant and his mother to report the matter to the Gardaí. Monsignor Stenson contacted the head of the order. The complainant subsequently said that Monsignor Stenson was “*very apologetic*” on receiving his complaint and that he was very kind and respectful to his mother and to him.

37.11 The head of the order contacted the mother immediately and apologised. In a series of telephone calls, it was clear that the mother was very forgiving. She said that her son did not propose to take any further action. The order assured her that Fr Terentius had no contact with young boys; he was not exercising any ministry and they were organising a treatment programme for him. The order was not in direct contact with her son at this time.

Restrictions

37.12 The superiors of the order had a meeting with Fr Terentius who now admitted to a series of incidents involving six boys in total, including the incidents involving the two complainants, and one involving an 18-year-old. Fr Terentius was reluctant to go on a treatment programme but was persuaded to do so. The order set out the following restrictions on him:

- He could not leave the premises without the consent of the head of the order;
- He could have no contact whatever with young boys, including altar boys;
- He could have no contact with people who reported the incidents;
- He could not exercise any pastoral ministry whatever, even evening weekly mass (the priest found this last stipulation very hard to accept).

37.13 Arrangements were made to send him to Stroud. Stroud asked for a letter setting out the concerns, examples of the problems and any other helpful information. In his referral letter, the head of the order outlined the problems as:

- Alcohol abuse: this had been discussed with him on a few occasions and he had not accepted that he needed to follow a recovery programme;
- Child sexual abuse: *“As a result of an investigation into a recent allegation of sexual abuse by [Fr Terentius] of a young boy (13 to 14 years), some twelve to fifteen years ago, we have become concerned about the existence of other inappropriate sexual contacts by him with other boys around the same time”.*

37.14 Fr Terentius was sent to Stroud in January 1995. After assessment, he first undertook the addictions programme and then the psychosexual treatment programme.

Contact with complainants

37.15 In January 1995, the first complainant wrote to the order saying he had no intention of making a formal complaint; he just wanted to ensure that there would be no recurrence. The order replied offering an apology and assuring him that Fr Terentius was not in a position to be involved in a similar betrayal of trust.

37.16 The second complainant’s mother continued to be in touch with the order. The order arranged a meeting with this complainant which took place in July 1995. At the meeting, he said that he was pleased to have been contacted, he did not want anything from the order, he did not intend to go to court, he would like to meet Fr Terentius after he completed his programme, he wanted to keep in contact in the future, and he was grateful for the recognition – that was his main aim. The head of the order told him that he was entitled to go to the Gardaí and seek a legal solution. The complainant said he would not do that and was not interested in money. He sought recognition of the wrong done to him and an assurance that Fr Terentius would not be in a position to do it again.

37.17 In September 1995, it emerged that Fr Terentius had been drinking while in Stroud and had been doing so since March. He was transferred to

another treatment centre. The authorities in Stroud suggested that the order should suspend him from any active public ministry and withdraw all priestly faculties. They also suggested that he be asked to pay for some of his treatment himself as he was clearly fairly well off and was in the process of buying a car in the UK which he intended to bring back to Ireland.

37.18 Fr Terentius wrote to the order expressing great shame and remorse. The head of the order replied expressing his deep disappointment and sadness but also his support. He suspended Fr Terentius from public ministry and was awaiting a meeting of the governing body of the order before deciding on the removal of faculties. He asked Fr Terentius to pay half the costs of his current treatment. Fr Terentius was shocked at the suspension.

37.19 The order was in touch with the first complainant's sister. She reported further concerns from another sister. They discussed contacting the Gardaí; the order was willing to do so but the complainant did not want this.

37.20 Fr Terentius completed a primary treatment course in the second therapeutic facility. As a place in Stroud was not available until December 1995, a new place had to be found. He moved to a care home for drug and alcohol dependents in early November. In early December, he returned to Stroud. He wanted to drive himself there but this was not approved and the order arranged for him to be accompanied. He was asked by the order not to use his car while in Stroud. In fact, Stroud took his car keys. (Later, the order advised him to sell the car. He did this and gave the proceeds to the order as part payment for his treatment; he subsequently made another contribution to the cost.)

37.21 The personnel in Stroud were of the view that it was unlikely that they would recommend Fr Terentius for return to ministry; they considered he was manipulative and untrustworthy; the likelihood of a relapse was very high and the order was going to have a "*big problem handling the situation*" when he left Stroud. He left there and returned to live in one of the order's houses in Ireland in July 1996. On leaving, the assessment was that he had "*almost no internal inhibitors upon which to rely once he leaves residential treatment*". Because of this, it would "*be an absolute necessity that a great deal of external inhibitors be put in place*" in order to help him manage his sexual

addiction. He would need 24-hour monitoring and supervision and ought never travel alone or be in public ministry.

37.22 On his return, the order imposed the following conditions:

- He was not allowed to leave the house without the permission of the superior.
- He must be accompanied when leaving the house at all times.
- He could not celebrate public mass.
- He was not allowed to be the principal celebrant in the oratory.
- The order would look for a suitable job which would not include contact with minors.

37.23 He also began individual and group therapy.

37.24 The order reported the allegations to the Gardaí in July 1996 in accordance with the procedures of the *Framework Document*. The names of the complainants were not given as they did not want this. The Gardaí were told that Fr Terentius was retired and not engaged in any ministry.

37.25 Fr Terentius was given office work within the order. In a follow up visit, Stroud was impressed with the supervision arrangements. Fr Terentius followed the Stroud continuing care programme until 1998 and was also seeing a therapist locally, initially once every two weeks and subsequently once a month. He was also attending AA meetings and was always accompanied when he left the house.

37.26 In April 1997, Archbishop Connell wrote to the order (he wrote to all relevant orders at the time) asking if the allegations against Fr Terentius had been addressed. He was not “*looking for specific detail, merely simple confirmation that the Diocese can close its files in their regard. My sole purpose in making this enquiry is to eliminate the risk that at some future date, for whatever reason, the concerns raised may appear to have been overlooked*”. The order replied reassuring the Archbishop that the alleged offences had been addressed, that Fr Terentius underwent appropriate treatment and was now engaged in work which precluded him from contact

with young children and there was ongoing supervision by a senior member of the order.

37.27 In November 1997, the wife of the second complainant telephoned the head of the order to say that her husband was upset that contact had not been maintained. She said the head of the order had promised to keep in touch and to arrange a meeting with Fr Terentius. The head did not think he had promised this and there is no evidence in the documents that he had. The head phoned the complainant and updated him on the current status of Fr Terentius. He explained that the order had been advised against a meeting between the complainant and the priest but that, if the complainant wanted it, it would be arranged. The head then met the complainant and his wife in December 1997. The complainant said that the order had not been in touch since the last meeting over two years earlier. He was angry and not sure what he wanted. He talked about a financial settlement and about going public. He said he wanted counselling and to meet Fr Terentius. The head pointed out that it is not recommended that victims meet their abusers. This complainant was not entirely convinced about this but agreed to wait until after counselling. The order was in touch with him several times during 1998.

Third complaint, 1998

37.28 The order was also in touch with the first complainant's sister and, in May 1998, she alleged that her sister had also been abused by Fr Terentius.

37.29 The order offered to meet the sister who had allegedly been abused but she did not want to make a complaint. The allegation was not put to Fr Terentius as there was no specific complaint or allegation.

37.30 Meanwhile, Fr Terentius was continuing with the Stroud continuing care programme. He was expressing some unhappiness about his work environment, particularly his treatment by his immediate superior. These complaints were, in the Commission's view, relatively trivial and the order was very patient in dealing with them.

37.31 In June 1998, the order again met the second complainant. The complainant said he had become very angry and aggressive since starting counselling. He felt that the fact that the order was paying for the counselling

meant the Church was still in control. He intended to cease counselling. He talked about a financial settlement but did not want to go to court. He said he could use money for a holiday and for counselling over which he would have control.

37.32 There was another meeting in July 1998. The head of the order told the complainant that Fr Terentius had agreed to meet him and that he (the head) would be present at the meeting. The question of compensation was discussed. The head told the complainant and his wife that the order was not responsible for the priest's transgressions. The order wanted to keep the question of compensation separate from the pastoral response. The order did not want to get involved in paying money to any parties and refused to take any legal responsibility for the action of one of its priests.

37.33 In July 1998, the first complainant's mother rang to complain that the order had not kept an appointment with her. It would appear that such an appointment had not been made. She was looking for compensation for her son as he was on expensive medication. The head of the order met this complainant and his parents. His sister contacted the head of the order and told him that she had contacted the health board for the area in which Fr Terentius was living but was told that the abused person would have to be in contact. She said she had also reported to a young priest in her parish soon after the incident happened and nothing had been done.

37.34 In September 1998, the second complainant told the order that he was considering legal action if the order did not make some offer. The order continued contact and meetings with both complainants and their family members. Both complainants wanted an out of court settlement and were mainly looking for expenses.

37.35 In November 1998, the head of the order met Monsignor John Dolan, the chancellor of the Archdiocese of Dublin, to update him on developments in this case.

37.36 The first complainant wrote directly to Fr Terentius seeking his medical expenses. Fr Terentius replied offering him about one third of the amount claimed and said that this was all he could afford. The complainant accepted

this and also accepted the order's offer of a charitable donation to cover some of the medical expenses. This was arranged with a charity which specialises in helping victims of abuse; the order regarded arranging this as part of its pastoral response.

37.37 In December 1998, the second complainant met Fr Terentius. The meeting was mediated by the head of the order. Fr Terentius apologised to the complainant and the meeting was amicable. Subsequently, Fr Terentius sent him an unsolicited sum of money.

37.38 The order remained in touch with the complainants in 1999.

37.39 At this stage, Fr Terentius was still engaging in individual and group therapy. He now wanted some of the restrictions removed as he considered that the two complainants seemed to have settled matters with him. In July 1999, he complained to the order about not being allowed to go on holidays alone. In May 2000, his therapist recommended that he should not be allowed to travel alone. In October 2000, the therapist pointed out that Fr Terentius was working fine in therapy but there was no evidence of how he would be in another environment. She suggested gradual change "*maybe*", but no drastic change. She mentioned that Fr Terentius had written his life story, copies of which he was distributing to his friends, but it did not refer at all to the sexual abuse and she wondered if the sexual dimension of his life had been integrated. At her suggestion, the order contacted Stroud for advice on this issue. Stroud urged caution.

37.40 In November 2000, the order discovered that the priest had been drinking and he admitted he had not attended AA since 1998. He was still agitating to be allowed to holiday alone. He argued that a holiday was "*a fundamental human right*". The head of the order replied that the right of children to be protected from abuse was a superior right.

37.41 In June 2001, Fr Terentius's therapist said she could not achieve any more but said that the priest did need ongoing support. She considered that he "*is by no means free or cured of the underlying concerns*" but that he thought he was and his discontinuation of counselling indicated this. The therapist said he should go back to AA and she did not recommend

holidaying alone. He did go back to AA and remained angry at the continuing restrictions.

37.42 It is notable that Fr Terentius's perception of the views of his therapist was often markedly different from those views as recorded by the head of the order.

Granada report, 2001

37.43 In September 2001, Fr Terentius was sent to the Granada Institute for a reassessment. Stroud was no longer providing this service. The head of the order provided Granada with a summary of the priest's situation from notes which he had compiled over the years.

37.44 The report from Granada was issued in November 2001. Psychometric testing was carried out and the following documents were taken into account: the referral letter from the order, the summary of notes from therapists provided by the order and the priest's life story (which, as is noted above, did not make reference to sexual abuse).

37.45 The Commission considers the Granada report to be seriously deficient in many respects:

- The report states that two allegations of sexual abuse were made but that he had not admitted to any others – this is not true; he had admitted to several incidents involving six boys. Further, his therapist in the initial stages of his treatment had expressed the view that there were likely to have been “*loads of victims*”. Granada pointed out to the Commission that the therapist's views were not substantiated. However, it is clear from the order's referral notes that he had admitted to abusing more than two boys.
- The report states that the two boys were aged 17 at the time – this is untrue, they were aged 13/14. Granada told the Commission that this information was reported by the priest and that the assessment was based “*on the assumption that the ages of the victims ranged between 13 years to over 16 years*”.
- The report states that he had “*successfully completed a treatment programme for sex abusers in 1996*”. The Commission finds it

surprising that this can be stated when the full report from Stroud was not seen by Granada and that Granada did not ask for the full report.

- The report states that he “*continues to have therapy on an individual basis*” – it is not clear if this is true. He seems to have been seeing a spiritual advisor but not a therapist at this stage.

37.46 The report concluded that Fr Terentius:

- was at low risk of sexually re-offending;
- needed to be supported in his present alcohol free state;
- should continue to avoid any unsupervised contact with any children;
- should continue with counselling to deal with his anger;
- should be allowed to go on holiday and travel abroad without restriction.

37.47 As a result of this assessment, Fr Terentius was allowed to travel abroad on three occasions with a company specialising in holidays for older people. All his travelling companions were aged 50 or over. He was forbidden to interact with minors while on holidays. The head of the order told the Commission that he felt bound by the findings of the Granada report which recommended that he be allowed to travel.

37.48 Fr Terentius continues to live within the order and is subject to the restrictions described above. The order maintains an “*open door*” policy towards the complainants – they can get in touch whenever they want.

The Commission’s assessment

Church authorities

37.49 Responsibility for the wrong done in clerical child sexual abuse cases rests squarely with the offending priest. The authorities cannot undo the wrong but they can help to mitigate the harm by dealing properly with the complainants and the offender. In this case, the Commission considers that the order dealt well and quickly with the complaints. It dealt sympathetically with the complainants and did all it could to contribute to their healing process. It is clear that the complainants consider that their complaints were well handled.

37.50 The Commission considers that the order dealt well with Fr Terentius. He was immediately removed from ministry and placed in therapeutic care. A considerable amount of money was spent in attempting to rehabilitate him. After he returned to Ireland he was well supervised and monitored. His superiors displayed considerable patience in dealing with him.

37.51 The Commission is very concerned that the assessment carried out in the Granada Institute in 2001 did not take account of the full facts. The conclusions reached may be justified but, on its face, the assessment is, at best, questionable.

Communication between Church authorities

37.52 The Commission recognises that members of religious orders are subject to the rules of their order and complaints against them are dealt with by the order even if the priest in question was attached to the Archdiocese when the alleged abuse occurred. The Commission is concerned that this may mean the Archdiocese is not fully informed about abuse which occurred under its aegis. In this case, the Archdiocese was informed of the complaint. The Archdiocese informed the order of the complaint made to it and left it to the order to deal with it. There was no further communication until Archbishop Connell contacted all relevant orders in 1997. In this case, the absence of further communications between the order and the Archdiocese is not a major issue as the order was closely monitoring all Fr Terentius's activities. However, in general, the Commission is concerned that the Archdiocese does not require more frequent updates on the current status of religious order priests who abused children while under its aegis.

Gardaí and health board

37.53 The order did report to the Gardaí but, as the complainants in this case did not want to make a complaint to the Gardaí, there was no Garda investigation. Similarly, there was no contact with the health authorities.