

**Introduction**

40.1 Fr Klaudius was a member of a religious order. He was born in 1957 and ordained in 1985. He worked in the Archdiocese of Dublin in a number of different roles including hospital chaplain, prison chaplain, teacher, and in a parish. He spent a short time abroad doing supply work and had different positions in the management of the order. He was removed from ministry in 1995, was laicised and dispensed from the vows of his order in 2000 and died in 2005.

40.2 He admitted to abusing a number of children but the Commission is aware of only one formal complaint against him.

40.3 While Fr Klaudius was in the seminary, he had been assessed by a priest psychologist. This assessment concluded that he had issues relating to sexuality especially *“difficulty over gender”*. There is no written report of this assessment and the order took the view that there was *“no indication of [Fr Klaudius’s] problems existed during his formation”*. Shortly before the complaint was received, he had attended a treatment programme at a therapeutic clinic. His presence there had no ostensible connection with any issues of sexuality or child abuse. During his time there, he revealed that he had been sexually abused when he was five or six years old.

**Complaint, 1995**

40.4 The complaint to the order was made in July 1995. It related to events which had occurred in the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1991 but Fr Klaudius was, at this stage, working in a school outside of the Dublin Archdiocese.

40.5 In 1995, the complainant’s father told a member of the order that his son had been abused by Fr Klaudius four years previously when he was 17 years old. The member of the order reported to his superiors who arranged to meet both the young man and Fr Klaudius and to have a formal investigation. The young man described how his father had arranged for him to have therapy with Fr Klaudius because of some family difficulties. The

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This is a pseudonym.

abuse had occurred during these therapy sessions which were held in the order's house where Fr Klaudius lived. The abuse involved touching and masturbation. The boy told a friend about the abuse at the time and discovered that she already had suspicions about Fr Klaudius.

40.6 The young man told a local diocesan priest about the abuse at some stage. It is not clear when this was but the local priest thinks it was around 1995. This priest told the Commission that he advised the young man to contact the order. The young man did not want to report the matter to the Gardaí.

40.7 Fr Klaudius, in a sworn statement, admitted that something “*of a sexual nature*” had occurred between himself and the boy. He also admitted that similar incidents had occurred with another 17-year-old boy whom he did not name.

40.8 The issue of reporting this complaint to the Gardaí and the health board was discussed within the order and by its advisory panel. The complainant did not want it reported to the civil authorities. However, Fr Klaudius was working in a school at this time and had worked in a number of schools. The order was reluctant to report, even though the legal advice it received was that the complaint should be reported to the health board.

40.9 Fr Klaudius was immediately removed from the school where he was currently working and from public ministry and sent to a therapeutic centre in the UK. In this centre, he initially admitted to having abused a number of children. He gave the names of four others (apart from the complainant) and the approximate dates of the abuse. Two of these were his students while he was a teacher in the Archdiocese of Dublin. His method was to befriend vulnerable boys through normal contact at school, or in a pastoral setting, or he would create an image of himself as a healer to manipulate his victims with his “*special powers*”. He would use his counselling sessions for his sexual agenda which would arouse his victims and lead them to believe that they had provoked his advances. The therapist suspected that the true extent of his offending had not yet been disclosed and that he was a serious risk to boys between the ages of 12 and 17.

40.10 Later, he admitted to abusing a number of other students at the schools where he had taught and to targeting and grooming other unnamed boys. He provided a list which included five boys and one girl. The abuse was generally touching and masturbation but also included one act of buggery.

40.11 He claimed that he had himself been abused by nine different people during his childhood and adolescence.

40.12 In March 1996, the order's advisory panel agreed that the matter should be reported to the health board and the Gardaí. The *Framework Document* was in operation and it provided for such reporting. One member, who visited Fr Klaudius in the treatment centre, strongly supported reporting. The order was still reluctant to do this.

40.13 The local bishop in the area where Fr Klaudius had most recently been living was informed, but the Archbishop of Dublin was not, even though all the known abuse had occurred in Dublin.

40.14 Fr Klaudius left the treatment centre in October 1996. The centre considered that he had made progress but that he remained a risk to children. His behaviour could not be cured but could be controlled. He accepted that he used his position as a priest to create a position of trust and to abuse young boys.

40.15 He returned to Ireland to live in one of the order's houses in the Archdiocese of Dublin near a school in which he had admitted abuse. Neither the Archdiocese nor the school was informed of the complaint or of his presence in the Archdiocese. The order told the Commission that, in 1998, the school was told of his record by the then chaplain, who was a member of the same religious order.

40.16 Fr Klaudius entered into a behavioural contract with the order. This provided that:

- There was to be a weekly hour long debriefing meeting. There would be no confidentiality at the meeting, as all offences would be reported to the proper authority. This meeting was to be an examination of

everyday life, a review of day-to-day events past and planned, including holidays and time away from the house in which he lived. There would also be an evaluation of the meeting.

- There would be a support structure for him which included group therapy in the Granada Institute and regular returns to the UK treatment centre.
- He would have no ministry and he was not permitted to wear clerical garb outside the house where he lived.
- His only recreation was to be with other members of his order and included writing, music, art, golf and adult swimming.
- It was envisaged that he would partake in higher education in computer studies.

40.17 His support group included some family members. Soon after returning to Ireland, he admitted to the order that he had abused a family member.

40.18 The Eastern Health Board (EHB) was informed of the situation in March 1997. The immediate impetus for this was the recent admission about the family member (who did not live in the EHB area) and who was still a child. The order's contemporaneous records show that a health board social worker told the order that she intended to contact the school where the priest had admitted to abusing children. The order expected that there would be a "*dig for victims*" by the social worker.

40.19 In fact, the social worker did not contact the school. She told the Commission that it was indicated to the health board that contact had been made with the schools by the order. The HSE provided documentation in this case only after it had received a draft of this report. The health board for the area in which the family member lived was also informed. The abused child's mother was told and so was the local bishop in the area where the priest had been living.

40.20 Sometime in late 1997 or early 1998, Fr Klaudius began to groom a boy who delivered milk to the community. He then went back to the UK therapeutic facility which he had earlier attended for a further session of

residential therapy and remained there for about three months. On his return, he was referred to the Granada Institute for ongoing treatment and considered leaving the priesthood and the order. Granada expressed the view that an offender of Fr Klaudius's age had a better chance of living an offence-free life if he left the order, earned his own living and made his own way in life rather than remaining in the order. On the other hand, the head of the order considered he had a better chance of not offending if he remained within the order.

40.21 In April 1998, the advisory panel recommended that Fr Klaudius should not have leave of absence and should be confronted with the fact that he would be subject to strict supervision for the rest of his life.

40.22 In 1998, the complainant looked for financial support from the order. The order said it would pay for counselling and training but would not give him money. Some counselling was arranged.

### **Laicisation**

40.23 In July 1998, Fr Klaudius declared his intention to leave the order and seek laicisation. He asked for the continued support of the order to enable him to continue therapy and to have a support person. He also looked for financial support for accommodation and to enable him to train to become a consultant in career guidance. He sought £6,000 for accommodation and living expenses. Not surprisingly, the order considered his proposal to become involved in career guidance to be "*wholly inappropriate*".

40.24 Fr Klaudius was still attending Granada at this stage. He was attending there once a week for either individual or group therapy. The estimated cost of attending for one year was about £7,000. The order consulted Granada about whether it was safe to allow him to live outside the order's premises while awaiting laicisation. Granada considered that it was, but a member of the advisory panel was not so sure.

40.25 He received £6,000 from the order and moved out from the order's house in August 1998. He started a FÁS course.

- 40.26 The order provided a short character reference for Fr Klaudius when he left. The reference described him as “*intelligent, bright and sensitive. He is also industrious and hardworking*” and went on to “*recommend him for suitable employment*”. The reference was described by its author as “*very non-committal, but what else can I say*”.
- 40.27 In December 1998, a family member told the order that Fr Klaudius was angry with the order for sending him to the UK therapeutic centre. The order met some of his family members for the purposes of maintaining contact and monitoring how the family was getting on.
- 40.28 The Archdiocese of Dublin was informed of the application for laicisation as various actions had to be taken by it in order to proceed.
- 40.29 In March 1999, the order gave the priest just over £1,800 to buy a computer and related equipment. In August 1999, he sought and received further financial support, another £6,000, from the order. He was now receiving a social welfare payment.
- 40.30 In April 2000, a community worker became concerned about his access to young people taking part in a development programme. Granada recommended that Fr Klaudius inform the programme officials about his past. It is not known if he did or if anyone else did.
- 40.31 In November 2000, Fr Klaudius was granted a dispensation from clerical celibacy and was removed from the clerical state. The Archdiocese was informed of this. He wrote to the provincial of the order in June 2001 expressing his gratitude for the support both during and after his time in the order. He specifically acknowledged receipt of a cheque for £20,000 which helped him “*enormously to begin a new life*”. He also asked for forgiveness for the shame he had brought on the order.
- 40.32 The Gardaí were informed of the complainant’s allegation and of Fr Klaudius’s admission in relation to the family member but, as no abused person made a complaint to them, there was no investigation.
- 40.33 Fr Klaudius died in June 2005.

### **The Commission's assessment**

40.34 The Commission considers that the order was wrong to delay the initial reporting to the health board. Reporting did not occur until two years after the complaint was first made. This was despite the fact that Fr Klaudius was a teacher. In failing to report, the order acted against the clear advice of its own advisory panel and its legal advice. The order paid undue regard to the request/demand for confidentiality by the complainant and his father. While the delay in reporting was wrong, the Commission does not consider that the order attempted to obstruct, prevent or interfere with the proper investigation of the complaint.

40.35 There was totally inadequate communication between the order and the Archdiocese of Dublin about the complaint and the subsequent admissions. The order did not tell the Archdiocese about the complaint made or about Fr Klaudius's subsequent admissions of abuse. The Commission finds this extraordinary as the known abuse occurred mainly while he was operating under the aegis of the Archdiocese. The order did communicate with other dioceses where Fr Klaudius lived at various times but, extraordinarily, seems to have overlooked the Archdiocese of Dublin. This also meant that the Archdiocese could not inform the schools or the Department of Education.

40.36 The Commission is very concerned that the order had the clear impression that the health board would inform the relevant schools and this did not happen. The failure to inform the schools where this priest had taught and the Department of Education was a serious lapse by the health board.