

Introduction

44.1 Fr Cassius was born in 1910, ordained in 1934 and died in 1975. A complaint was made to the Archdiocese in 1999 that Fr Cassius sexually abused a girl in the early 1960s. The alleged abuse involved multiple sexual abuses including oral sex and gang rape involving the priest.

The Complaint

44.2 The complainant alleged that the abuse took place in an industrial school in the early 1960s, when she was aged between seven and ten. Fr Cassius was serving at the time in the parish where the industrial school was located. It was alleged that Fr Cassius lived in a house annexed to the school chapel and that a nun from the institution delivered the complainant to him for the purposes of permitting the abuse. The complainant alleged that the nun was complicit in the abuse on these occasions and that the nun herself participated in the abuse and watched it taking place. She alleged that she was gang-raped by three or four men in that house and that Fr Cassius was one of the participants in the rape.

44.3 Both the Gardaí and the Archdiocese investigated the complaint.

The Archdiocese Investigation

44.4 Another nun who had been in that institution for one month in 1951 and returned there for a longer period after 1975 stated on inquiry from the Archdiocese that, during her time there, priests did not have free access to the institution and there was no significant contact between the Archdiocese and the institution. She did recall one priest (not the priest being investigated, but against whom this complainant made a similar allegation) having attended from time to time to examine children on religious knowledge.

44.5 Monsignor Dolan, the chancellor at the time that the complaint was made, had a search carried out in the diocesan archives for relevant material concerning the institution between the period 1940 and 1971. This search however did not reveal any letters of complaint from anyone nor was there

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This is a pseudonym.

any record of concern from any outside agency about the institution during this time.

44.6 Similarly, the Commission has not come across any material that would indicate that there was any complaint made about this priest to the Archdiocese during his life time.

The Garda investigation

44.7 This investigation began when a statement was provided to the Gardaí by the complainant in July 1999 through her solicitor.

44.8 Garda records refer to the statement as being incomplete, as the complainant's solicitor had terminated the interview because she felt that the complainant was close to having a mental breakdown. The complainant lived abroad and had left Ireland a few days later with a promise to return to complete her statement. As the Gardaí did not consider the statement completed, their investigation did not significantly progress beyond this time. The Gardaí did obtain a copy of the unedited version of a media program involving the complainant. They also tried to arrange for the return of the complainant for the purposes of the completion of her statement but were unsuccessful in so doing. The Commission understands that the complainant has now declined to make any statement and the matter is consequently no longer under investigation by the Gardaí.

Civil Proceedings

44.9 Civil proceedings were issued by the complainant in September 1999 against the Archdiocese. The Commission is not aware of any outcome to the civil proceedings.

The Commission's assessment

44.10 The Archdiocese and the Gardaí did what they could to investigate this complaint. The priest was dead for 24 years when it was made so it was not possible to have a conclusive investigation.