

**Introduction**

54.1 Fr Cornelius was born in 1913 and ordained in 1937. He held various appointments throughout the Dublin Archdiocese over the following 48 years and eventually became a parish priest. He retired in 1985 on the grounds of ill health. He died in 1994, eight years before the allegations known to the Commission were made against him. The Commission is aware of two allegations of child sexual abuse against him. It is alleged that the abuse occurred in the period 1962 – 1971.

**First allegation**

54.2 The first allegation was made to the Gardaí in October 2002 by a woman who alleged that she had been abused by Fr Cornelius on two occasions in 1963. In a detailed statement to the Gardaí, she said that when Fr Cornelius arrived in her parish, he became very friendly with her parents. He frequently called to the house and gave her favourable treatment at the time of her First Communion. He then invited her to his house for tea where on two occasions he sat her on his knee and allegedly sexually assaulted her. The assaults consisted of hugging tightly and kissing on the face and neck. He would also get her to kiss him on the neck.

54.3 This complainant also told the Gardaí that, in 1980, she spoke to a newly ordained priest about Fr Cornelius. She states that she was told by this young priest that Fr Cornelius had been ministering in a parish on the north side of Dublin but had been removed and sent for treatment following complaints by parents in the parish to the bishop. The Commission has no independent evidence of any such complaints against Fr Cornelius, nor is there any evidence that he was sent for treatment. He was ministering in a north side parish at the time. There is no record in the archdiocesan files of a complaint in 1980 nor is there evidence that he was removed from his parish.

54.4 When investigating this complaint in 2002/2003, the Gardaí requested a copy of Fr Cornelius's CV from the Archdiocese. This was provided. There is no evidence that the Archdiocese was aware of why this request was

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This is a pseudonym.

made. The Child Protection Service (CPS) of the Archdiocese contacted the Gardaí in July 2004 to find out if there were any allegations against Fr Cornelius. The CPS was told by the Gardaí that the woman had made a complaint but they had concluded that the allegations did not constitute anything criminal. The woman did not want her identity disclosed to any third party nor did she want to be contacted by the Archdiocese.

### **Second allegation**

54.5 The second allegation was made in November 2005 to the Archdiocese by the mother of a woman who had committed suicide in 2004. She alleged that her daughter had been sexually assaulted by Fr Cornelius on several occasions while she was a schoolgirl, around 1971. This allegedly occurred in the same parish as the first allegation. The extent of the alleged abuse is not known to the Commission except for one specific incident of alleged penetration.

54.6 The mother was visited by the Child Protection Service victim support co-ordinator. She was offered counselling but she declined the offer. She told the support co-ordinator of other suspicions about Fr Cornelius in the 1970s. The Archdiocese informed the Gardaí. The woman did not want the Gardaí to contact her. The Gardaí concluded that there would be no investigation as both parties to the allegation were dead. The Archdiocese offered the mother a meeting with Archbishop Martin but this was declined.

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

54.7 The Archdiocese and the Gardaí dealt with these allegations appropriately.