

# Daly backs abuse inquiry

By JAMES PENN

THE PRIMATE OF ALL Ireland, Cardinal Cahal Daly, has pledged his support for a major police inquiry into clerical child abuse after a priest was jailed last week for paedophilia.

Cardinal Daly met senior RUC detectives last week to discuss allegations of widespread sexual and physical abuse in Catholic children's homes, according to the BBC.

Police looking into child sex abuse allegations would have an "open door" to him during their enquiry, he said.

Bishop Seamus Heggarty of Derry, and other senior bishops, have also promised police total support with their investigations.

Cardinal Daly and Bishop Heggarty first met with the RUC more than six months ago in the wake of the conviction of Fr Brendan Smyth, the paedophile priest

whose extradition delay to Northern Ireland eventually led to the downfall of the Irish Republic's Government.

The most recent investigations were sparked by the sentence last week of Fr Daniel Curran, for seven years for his brutal assaults on teenage boys he lured to his seaside cottage and pilled with drink.

Following the trial of Fr Curran, Cardinal Cahal Daly spoke of being "enormously distressed and horrified". He told reporters at Maynooth, the Irish seminary, that "I think of the poor children who were abused and the trauma they suffered."

"I am concerned about their families and concerned about the public who are scandalised by this. I am deeply deeply pained and distressed by this whole issue."

Cardinal Daly confirmed

that he had invited two RUC inspectors to see him because he had heard of the setting up of a special RUC child sex abuse unit, and was "anxious to know what were the best ways in which we could best cooperate."

The Cardinal said he was "amazed" at the suggestion that the unit had been specifically set up to investigate alleged clerical abuse.

Fr Curran, who was described as an alcoholic with paedophile tendencies, had pleaded guilty at Belfast Crown Court to 13 charges of sexual abuse, including nine of indecent assault and one of attempted buggery. They were aged between 11 and 14 years old.

He was a priest in the St Paul's parish of west Belfast and took the boys on "retreat" to his cottage near Tyrella Beach, Downpatrick, Co Down, where he abused them after heavy drinking sessions.

The incidents came to light one night in March last year, when a 14 year old boy ran from the house screaming. He was soaking wet after Curran had thrown two buckets of water over him, and pleaded for help from the family at the bungalow across the road.

"He was yelling that Fr Curran had abused him," said one eyewitness. "He was shaking violently and was badly bruised. His nose was bleeding and he was really frightened. He was like a wild horse. You would have needed a rope to tie him down."

The Irish Episcopal Conference met members of the committee on child sex abuse last week, and discussed with them the progress of their work in drafting a code of practice for bishops on abuse by clergy. The committee hopes to finish its work by the end of the year.

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