



Press Statement

Launch of the Review of Raphoe Diocese. 30th November 2011

I am happy to be able to publish and present the Review of the Diocese of Raphoe on the subject of child sexual abuse by members of the clergy of the Diocese. The Review of our Diocese was undertaken in August 2010. It was carried out by the independent National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church.

The purpose of the Review was to examine all case files from 1975 to 2010, determine how allegations and concerns were dealt with, interview key persons involved in child safeguarding, judge how cases are currently assessed, how the statutory authorities are notified and thus determine if there are any current risks to children. I fully accept the recommendations contained in the Review and I am committed to implementing them. Indeed many have already been acted upon.

During the past decades there have been very poor judgments and mistakes made. There were horrific acts of abuse of children by individual priests, that should never have happened, and if suspected should have been dealt with immediately in the appropriate manner.

Insufficient emphasis was placed on the needs of victims, often in the misguided attempt to protect the reputation of the Church. There were frequent cases of delays or non-reporting of allegations and complaints about child sexual abuse. We are truly sorry for the terrible deeds that have been inflicted on so many by a small minority of priests. We offer our humble apologies once more and seek their forgiveness for the dreadful harm that has been done to them, their families and friends.

Hopefully those grave errors will never be repeated. I am glad to say that this Review has concluded that the Diocese now has a robust safeguarding policy and procedure in place for safeguarding children, that files are kept in a satisfactory and orderly fashion, that there is a prompt referral system to the state authorities and good co-operation with the Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The sexual abuse of a young person by a member of the clergy in whom that child placed unhesitating trust inflicts a terrible wound in the lives of victims, families, communities and in the Church. It is repugnant and constitutes a stumbling-block to a life of faith in those who suffer. It gives scandal to the whole of society and is rightly regarded as

repulsive. I have spent endless hours and given much time and energy to eradicating this evil, repairing what was damaged as best I could, restoring justice and putting structures in place to prevent, as far as possible, this criminal sin from happening again.

The people of the Diocese of Raphoe have suffered much over the last twenty years with a proportionately high number of priests with complaints of child sexual abuse made against them. The number of allegations was also high. It is to our shame that we admit this. But this fact makes us all the more determined to create a safe environment for children in our parishes; to assist survivors in their pain and loss, and to have an up-to-date policy and procedures with best practice in place.

The Diocese intends to make renewed contact with survivors of child sexual abuse by members of the clergy through its support persons and through notices in local newspapers so as to make sure that their needs for appropriate counselling, spiritual support or words of apology are adequately met. In doing so, it is not our intention to intrude in any way in the life of these people who have suffered abuse, and we fully respect their individual desires and preferences.

Our Child Safeguarding Committee has recently published another Policy Document: *Safeguarding Children. Policy and Procedures. 2011*. It is the fruit of much expert advice and hard work. It is also the outcome of much training in parishes over the last number of years, and the establishment of best practice in the Diocese.

“Towards Healing”, is a new, independent and confidential Counselling and Support Service for Survivors of Clerical, Religious & Institutional abuse.

The service today announced the provision of extended opening hours following the publication of reports on the Diocese of Raphoe, Derry, Kilmore, Dromore, Ardagh and Clonmacnoise and Tuam.

From today the “Towards Healing” service will open on an extended hours basis, as follows:

- From 11am-11pm today, tomorrow and Friday and from 11am-8pm on Saturday and Sunday. 3rdth & 4th December.

The helpline can be contacted by calling:

- **Freephone 1800-303416** from anywhere in Ireland
And on **0800-0963315** from Northern Ireland and the UK.

or by email at info@towardshealing.ie

Those affected by these terrible crimes can also make contact with the Counselling Services of the HSE who have a helpdesk in Letterkenny which is serviced from 8am to 12 midnight on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Thereafter as needs be. Their free phone is 1800 303529.

While it was painful to be in the glare of public opinion, we must also be grateful to the media who were instrumental in bringing to light a lot of child sexual abuse and raising awareness of the awful crime it is. It all spurs us to do our utmost to protect children, to provide them with a safe and happy environment in their young days and to give their welfare paramount importance.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to say that the task of ensuring the safeguarding of young people in the Diocese of Raphoe is an ongoing one. We are determined to ensure that the structures we have put in place are effective and people will have access to the appropriate courses of action should they have any concerns or suspicions of child sexual abuse. We can assure you that our efforts in this regard will be unrelenting,

ENDS

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