

Introduction

29.1 Fr Naughton was ordained in 1963 for St Patrick's Missionary Society, Kiltegan, Co. Wicklow (commonly known as the Kiltegan Fathers) and after his ordination he spent time in Africa and the West Indies. He left the West Indies following a disagreement with another teacher and the bishop and sought a position in the Archdiocese of Dublin.

29.2 He was first appointed to Aughrim Street parish in April 1976 and then to Valleymount parish in 1980. While working there, he was incardinated (see Chapter 3) into the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1981.

29.3 The Commission is aware of complaints of child sexual abuse against Fr Naughton by more than 20 named people. There are suspicions in respect of many more. He has twice been convicted of child sexual abuse.

Valleymount

29.4 In 1983, two parishioners from Valleymount expressed concerns to Bishop Donal Murray about Fr Naughton's behaviour. They claimed he was "*too close to the altar boys*". Bishop Murray told the Commission that the two men wanted Fr Naughton removed from the parish. He said that the men refused to be specific with him and that they were not suggesting that there was anything wrong going on. The bishop told the Commission that he was uneasy and was afraid that it could involve inappropriate or even abusive activity with children. The parish priest at the time investigated the complaints and concluded that they were unfounded.

29.5 The type of investigation carried out is not chronicled in the files and would appear to have been totally inadequate even by the standards of the time. It can be compared unfavourably with the excellent investigations carried out in 1977 by Canon Ardlé McMahon into complaints

and in 1983 by Canon McMahon and Monsignor Stenson in the Fr Bill Carney case (see Chapter 28). Bishop Murray considers that this comparison is unfair as there was no specific complaint of child sexual abuse in Valleymount.

29.6 Bishop Murray did interview Fr Naughton about the behaviour but he denied any wrongdoing. Bishop Murray said he told Archbishop Ryan of the allegations. The Commission accepts that he did tell Archbishop Ryan even though there is no contemporaneous record of this on the files. Monsignor Stenson was under the impression that Archbishop Ryan had been informed.

29.7 In a statement to Gardaí in 2003 another parishioner stated that she had been informed in 1983 by two children that they had been abused by Fr Naughton. She said she had told the parish priest of the abuse on two separate occasions and in response he had told her *“to pray for the victims”*. She stated that she and her husband approached another priest who took their complaints seriously. That priest’s recollection was that he reported the matter to an auxiliary bishop. He thought it was Bishop Murray but Bishop Murray denies that it was he. The parishioner stated that she also tried to talk to Bishop Murray when she was attending a confirmation service in 1984 but that *“he dismissed me and pretended he didn’t hear me, and walked away”*. There was no record of these complaints on the files of the Archdiocese until the mid 1990s. Bishop Murray told the Commission that he does recall a woman speaking to him after confirmation but said it was about Fr Naughton’s difficult attitude and that sexual assault was not mentioned. The Commission considers that Bishop Murray should have pursued the matter with the woman since he was already aware that there were some problems with Fr Naughton.

29.8 In April 1984, Bishop Murray also received a letter from another parishioner proposing an investigation into *“a less than satisfactory situation”* in the parish. Bishop Murray told the Commission that this letter referred to financial matters.

29.9 Within six weeks Fr Naughton was transferred to Donnycarney parish.

29.10 At least four complainants have come forward from Vallemount but it is suspected that many more children were abused. As recently as February 2006, the local parish priest, a different person to the parish priest who was there in 1983, sought information on counselling services for those who had been affected by Fr Naughton’s behaviour. He expressed the opinion that there might be a lot more people in the parish who may have been abused

but who had not come forward. He put the number at between ten and twelve. He was encouraged by the Archdiocese's Child Protection Service to try and persuade anyone who might have been affected to come forward.

29.11 In June 2009, just as this report was being finalised, Fr Naughton pleaded guilty to charges of sexual assault in relation to a complainant from Valleymount.

29.12 In a statement regarding the Valleymount situation, issued in 2002, Bishop Murray stated that he was very aware that if he had derived "*more information from the various interviews I conducted, it might have been possible to prevent some of the dreadful suffering of child abuse. I very much wish that I had been able to do so. It is a matter of the greatest regret to me that I did not manage at that time to get to the root of the problem*". No attempt was made by Bishop Murray to revisit these concerns even after he became aware of Fr Naughton's abusive behaviour in Donnycarney and Ringsend (see below). Bishop Murray told the Commission that, when the Donnycarney complaint was raised at an Auxiliary Bishops' meeting with Archbishop McNamara in November 1985, he mentioned the concerns of the two men who had approached him in Valleymount. At this stage the concerns about Valleymount were known to two Archbishops and several auxiliary bishops and none of these men thought of revisiting the issue.

Donnycarney, 1984-1986

29.13 One of the more serious sexual assaults committed by Fr Naughton was against an 11 year old altar boy from Donnycarney Parish, Mervyn Rundle. The assaults took place on a number of occasions in 1984/85. The young boy told his mother about the assaults.

29.14 The Rundle family sought the help of a family friend and in November 1985 they (Mervyn, his father and the family friend) met the chancellor, Monsignor Stenson, at Archbishop's House. Archbishop McNamara had replaced Archbishop Ryan as Archbishop. At that stage the family, who were a religious family, were not anxious to report to the Gardaí as they felt the church would take steps to solve the problem. The father told Monsignor Stenson at that meeting that a number of other children might also have been abused by Fr Naughton. He named one other possible victim and said that

there might be five. Monsignor Stenson then interviewed Mervyn on his own. Mervyn Rundle told the Commission that Monsignor Stenson questioned him closely about his account and he found this an intimidating experience.

Meeting with Fr Naughton

29.15 The very next day, Monsignor Stenson met Fr Naughton who categorically denied all the allegations against him. He stated that there may have been an incident of horseplay which may have been misinterpreted and that he had since apologised to the family for any misunderstanding. He did, however, tell Monsignor Stenson about the fact that he had been confronted by Bishop Murray in relation to an allegation. He said that the bishop had told him that it was nothing to worry about and that “*cranks⁹⁷ often make allegations*”. He agreed with Monsignor Stenson to seek a transfer and gave an undertaking that he would withdraw from his responsibilities for the altar boys.

29.16 Ten days later Fr Naughton did admit to abusing Mervyn Rundle on six different occasions but denied any other incidents of abuse. The reaction of the Archdiocese was that he should take a break from the scene for a few days at least. In a January 1986 memo, Monsignor Stenson indicated that Fr Naughton had withdrawn from his involvement with the altar boys and was happy to remain in Donnycarney “*now that some of the dust has settled*”.

Medical report

29.17 Fr Naughton was referred to a consultant psychiatrist in relation to the abuse of Mervyn Rundle. The psychiatrist’s conclusions were that the abuse was a manifestation of Fr Naughton’s overwhelming loneliness and was merely a misguided attempt to establish a relationship. He contrasted it with other cases that they (meaning himself and the Church authorities) had had in the past where, unfortunately, there had been a long history of similar episodes. He said he was basing his analysis on the view that this was a once-off event and stated: “*I take it you have no evidence to the contrary*”.

29.18 He had not been informed that there might have been other children involved in Donnycarney, nor was he informed that there were suspicions about Fr Naughton while he was in Valleymount. The Archdiocese should

⁹⁷ Fr Naughton’s words

have provided a full account to the psychiatrist in order to ensure that he could issue a meaningful report. The Archbishop thanked him for his report but did not address the fact that he, the Archbishop, did know that this was not a once-off event.

29.19 In February 1986, Fr Naughton was still living in the parish and the Rundle parents and their friend were annoyed by the lack of action and threatened to take the matter to the Gardaí. Their friend wrote the following letter to Monsignor Stenson. It clearly sets out how the matter had been handled to date:

“Following our meeting in your office on Fri 29th Nov. 1985 and the resulting lack of action it is now necessary to put details of the whole matter on paper for the record.

On Nov. 29th 1985 at 10:15am a very serious charge of child abuse was made against a priest in a Donnycarney parish. One case in particular was brought to your attention, that of young Mervyn Rundle, although there were others that were known of. Having given you a copy of the notes I myself had made after talking to the child, I arranged at your request to bring the child and his father to see you that afternoon at 2:15pm. In the meantime you said you would consult with the Archbishop who was in the house at the time.

That afternoon the child and his father came to your office. You questioned the child yourself and he confirmed what you had been told that morning by me. You assured us that immediate action would be taken.

On December 3rd 1985 Mr. Rundle telephoned you about the matter of going to the parish priest for confession. In the course of the conversation you told Mr. Rundle that Fr. Naughton wished to tell the parish priest himself about the matter of child abuse. You had said that the charges had not been denied. Mr. Rundle left the matter in your hands assured by you that positive action would be taken.

However, when the parish priest came to the Rundle home on Friday the 6th Dec he was shocked to hear, for the first time, that one of his

priests was involved in child abuse in the parish. He had not been informed by Fr. Naughton, he had not been informed by the Archbishop and he had not been informed by you yourself. This raises several very disturbing points of a very serious nature.

1 *That a priest who had been charged with and had not denied child abuse was called to Archbishop's House and was allowed to leave at once to return to the same parish.*

2 *That both you and Dr. McNamara knew about the matter and yet a week later you did not see fit or think the matter of child abuse serious enough to see if the parish priest knew about it.*

3 *Knowing that child abuse is a very serious crime you allowed the priest to return to the same parish where the same children were.*

4 *That the Roman Catholic Church which claims to be the moral guardians of the people treat child abuse in such an off-hand manner calls into question the Church's ability to govern anything.*

The way the whole matter has been handled by Archbishop's House has made the Rundle family feel very guilty and angry, as I do, by the manner in which they have been let down. The only reason that you were informed was to allow you to deal with the matter with as little fuss as possible. In this we were wrong not to have contacted the Gardai first. This mistake will now be rectified. The very least that was expected was that the priest would have been removed from the parish. Today, 11 weeks later the priest is still in the parish. This goes against all the medical information I have. In fact it seems nothing at all has been done.

I can see no defence for your lack of action and the matter must now be taken up at another level and because of the Church's lack of interest in the problem of its priests being involved in child abuse it will have to be brought out openly. There is now the additional fact that both Dr. McNamara and you knew about the child abuse and did what appears to be nothing. I would also have to question the matter of

other priests who “were” involved in child abuse and you claim were treated. The whole thing takes on very sinister tones.

Before any other action is taken by me, I would like to discuss the matter with you to make sure there is no misunderstanding.”

Monsignor Stenson disagreed with the conclusions reached and, in reply to this letter, stated: *“That is simply not true as action was taken at parochial level and professional help and guidance obtained for the priest concerned. You will appreciate that I am not at liberty to divulge the precise details of this help”.*

29.20 At this stage Monsignor Stenson was aware of the existence of another allegation. A complaint had been made to a local priest by the parents of another altar boy.

29.21 Monsignor Stenson informed Archbishop McNamara of the complaints, both about inaction in relation to the Mervyn Rundle complaint and the new complaint. Monsignor Stenson met Mr and Mrs Rundle in February 1986 and explained what steps the Church had taken, including a psychiatric evaluation, in relation to Fr Naughton. He did not inform them about the suspicions that had been raised about Fr Naughton’s time in Valleysmount. Monsignor Stenson told the Commission that, for reasons of confidentiality, he did not consider that he was free to tell them about the other complaints.

29.22 Monsignor Stenson advised Fr Naughton to tell his psychiatrist about all the allegations against him. It is not known if this happened.

Stroud, 1986

29.23 Eventually, in August 1986, Fr Naughton was relieved of his curacy and sent to Stroud for a course of therapy with the promise of a further placement in the Archdiocese on receipt of a favourable report from there.

29.24 In September 1986, the director of Stroud indicated to the Archbishop that he did not believe Fr Naughton was in touch with the gravity of the situation and expressed the view that it was difficult to believe that the problem was only surfacing now.

29.25 The director of Stroud noted, in October 1986, that he was more optimistic that things could work out for Fr Naughton. However, he warned that Fr Naughton would need further support when he returned to Dublin. He also advised that the parish priest in his new placement should be informed of the situation.

Ringsend, 1986

29.26 Fr Naughton was appointed in December 1986 to the parish of Ringsend and despite his background, was given responsibility for some work in schools. He told Stroud in a follow-up meeting that this was not a problem for him given his background. Stroud expressed concern that he had ended his relationship with his counsellor. The Archdiocese arranged for him to see yet another counsellor but, in June 1988, the headmistress of the local girl's primary school expressed concerns about Fr Naughton engaging in horseplay and failing to desist when brought to his attention. She had heard about the complaints from Donnycarney and Co Wicklow.

29.27 By September 1988, complaints about Fr Naughton's inappropriate behaviour and the fact that children were often visiting his house were known to the Archdiocese.

29.28 A specific complaint was made by a young boy who had accompanied Fr Naughton to a funeral. The boy said he was inappropriately touched by him in the car on the way to the graveyard. He ran home and complained to his parents who reported it to the principal of the school. The principal reported it to the health board and the director of community care reported the matter to the Gardaí.

29.29 By early October 1988, Fr Naughton had been relieved of his duties in Ringsend. The Archdiocese thought a further period in Stroud would refocus him. However, he did not return to Stroud immediately but was placed under the care of yet another doctor in Dublin. This doctor stated that Fr Naughton should be given another chance with as many precautions as possible put in place. He suggested a position as a chaplain in a hospital. He expressed himself doubtful about the Stroud techniques and the possibility of a fundamental change or transformation in Fr Naughton's behaviour. Fr

Naughton did return to Stroud in December 1988 and remained there for five months.

29.30 It should be noted that the situation regarding Fr Naughton was quite well known in the parish of Ringsend. A local chaplain and teacher told the Commission that, on the day after Fr Naughton was removed from his duties in the parish of Ringsend, one of the girls in his class told him that the priest had been removed because "*he was messing with altar boys*". This suggests that the situation regarding Fr Naughton was being spoken about in the parish of Ringsend. This chaplain also told the Commission that this was the first he had heard of the reasons surrounding Fr Naughton's removal. Later that week he met the local public health nurse and told her that he knew nothing of the circumstances surrounding Fr Naughton's removal. The nurse was dealing with the complaints and she briefed him on the situation. He also told the Commission that, when Fr Naughton was appointed to Ringsend in December 1986, and despite the fact that he was to share a house with the incoming Fr Naughton, he was not informed by the Archdiocese of complaints about Fr Naughton.

29.31 Bishop Kavanagh spoke to the St Patrick's Missionary Society about Fr Naughton's position in January 1989. The Society told the bishop that it was not aware of any similar complaints about Fr Naughton before his appointment to the Archdiocese of Dublin. The Society was clear that the Archdiocese, not the Society, was now responsible for Fr Naughton.

29.32 Fr Naughton was not given any further appointments by the Archdiocese.

29.33 Further complaints emerged from Ringsend at a later stage.

Health board response

29.34 Following notification from the school principal, health board personnel including the acting director of community care, the social work services and the public health nurse immediately responded to the complaints. At this stage the 1987 guidelines on child abuse had been issued by the Department of Health (see Chapter 6) so the acting director of community care, on hearing of the allegation, informed the Gardaí at Ringsend of the complaint.

She also convened a case conference to which the social workers, the Gardaí and the public health nurse were invited. The Gardaí sent their apologies. It was decided at that conference that the public health nurse should approach the parents of all the altar boys and also the parents of those boys involved in Fr Naughton's garden project. This was a project in which Fr Naughton encouraged young boys to assist him growing vegetables.

29.35 The public health nurse told the Commission that it was decided that the parents should speak with their own children to see whether there had been any inappropriate behaviour by Fr Naughton and if so, that they should come back to her and seek advice on how they could handle it. She also told them that if a subsequent disclosure was made, they could come back at any time and seek either counselling or advice. She gave evidence that the school principal had a very good relationship with the boys and that she encouraged the families that, if they did not want to communicate with her, they should communicate with him or any other person in the health board they thought might be appropriate.

29.36 The acting director of community care followed up matters by contacting Stroud. She expressed her concern that Fr Naughton had received treatment in the past but had subsequently re-offended. She was assured by Stroud that provision had been made for Fr Naughton under strict supervision outside the Dublin area and that he would not be receiving a further diocesan appointment. She also contacted her health board counterpart on the north side of the city to ensure that her counterpart was aware that there had been incidents in Donnellycarney and subsequent incidents in Ringsend. In May 1989 she contacted Monsignor Stenson in order to get further information about Fr Naughton's current whereabouts.

Return to Kiltegan, 1989

29.37 In May 1989, St Patrick's Missionary Society agreed, at the request of the Dublin Archdiocese, to give accommodation to Fr Naughton at their headquarters at Kiltegan where work was provided for him. An attempt was made to excommunicate him from the Archdiocese of Dublin but, as the St Patrick's Missionary Society was unable or unwilling to readmit him to the order, he remained and still remains a priest of the Dublin Archdiocese. The Archdiocese paid an allowance towards his upkeep in Kiltegan even though

the Society did not think this was necessary. He attended a support group and he carried out some limited ministry. There was extensive communication between the Archdiocese and the Society in relation to him in the period 1989 – 1992.

Aughrim Street complaints

29.38 In the mid to late 1990s, a number of complaints of sexual assault were made to Gardaí by men who claimed they were abused by Fr Naughton while he was a curate in Aughrim Street between 1976 and 1980. The Gardaí followed up these complaints but the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) directed that no prosecution should take place due to the lapse of time.

Prosecution

29.39 A number of complainants who were already known to the Archdiocese made complaints to the Gardaí in 1995 and 1996. Fr Naughton was prosecuted in relation to sexual assaults on three boys. In May 1998, he pleaded guilty to six counts of indecent assault on Mervyn Rundle, the other altar boy from Donnycarney and the boy from Ringsend. He was sentenced to three years imprisonment by the Dublin Circuit Court. This was reduced on appeal to two and a half years.

29.40 The only incidents of abuse which Fr Naughton had admitted to archdiocesan officials were those relating to Mervyn Rundle.

Follow-up by the Archdiocese

29.41 In October 1995, Archbishop Connell met the Rundles and apologised to them. Counselling was offered to all the complainants. In the course of making inquiries about these complaints, the Archdiocese was told of a suspicion that Fr Naughton may have abused while he was in the West Indies.

29.42 After his conviction, a letter from the Archbishop expressing his sorrow and offering pastoral outreach was circulated to the parishes where Fr Naughton had served.

29.43 There was again extensive communication between the Archdiocese and St Patrick's Missionary Society about what was to happen when Fr

Naughton was released from prison. He was released in June 2000. He was accommodated in a number of religious residences and eventually, the Society agreed that it would look after him under strict conditions.

29.44 The Archdiocese and the Society discussed the monitoring arrangements and who would be liable for any further offending by Fr Naughton. He was receiving therapy but he was a reluctant participant.

29.45 A report from Granada in June 2000 stated that Fr Naughton was unlikely to re-offend and had not abused in many years. It was stated that he would not require stringent monitoring or restrictions. It was recommended that he be placed in a religious community setting.

29.46 He returned to Kiltegan in January 2001, initially on a six month trial basis. He was forbidden from engaging in ministry and was not allowed to have any unsupervised contact with children. An agreement was signed between the Archdiocese and the Society which stipulated that Fr Naughton was to remain the responsibility of the Archdiocese and the Archdiocese was responsible for his supervision. This agreement has been renewed every six months since then. Fr Naughton became a beneficiary of the Clerical Fund Society (see Chapter 8).

29.47 He is visited regularly by his priest advisor who is very kind to him.

29.48 The health board was informed of his living arrangements and was satisfied with the measures adopted by the Archdiocese.

29.49 In spite of some difficulties and his desire to take on ministry, the arrangements seem to be working out reasonably well. He continues to be monitored by the Granada Institute. The delegate visits regularly to check that he is keeping to the restrictions that have been imposed.

29.50 Civil claims have been settled with a number of complainants.

Other complaints

29.51 During the currency of the Commission a number of other complaints have been received and are in the process of being investigated.

29.52 Following the *Prime Time* programme *Cardinal Secrets* in 2002, the Gardaí conducted an inquiry as to whether there was sufficient evidence to mount a case of misprision of felony against any Church official (see Chapter 5). They concluded there was not: “*with the exception of this apathetic attitude in relation to this [the Mervyn Rundle] incident there does not appear to be any other evidence of knowledge by the Church as to Tom Naughton’s catalogue of abuse*”.

The Commission’s assessment

The Archdiocese

29.53 In the Commission’s view, Bishop Murray must take some responsibility for the very poor handling of complaints against this priest. The Commission believes it is to his credit that he recognised this when he issued his statement admitting his failure to follow up properly the complaints he had received from Valleymount.

29.54 It is unacceptable that, when the Donnycarney complaints were being discussed by the bishops, he, they and Archbishop McNamara did not return to the Co Wicklow parish and carry out further investigations. This was despite the fact that Bishop Murray told the Commission that he informed the meeting about the two men’s complaints about Fr Naughton.

29.55 The archdiocesan authorities were wrong not to inform all priests in Ringsend that there had been a serious complaint about Fr Naughton while he worked in Donnycarney.

29.56 Overall, in their handling of the complaints against Fr Naughton, archdiocesan authorities, particularly Bishop Murray, the Valleymount parish priest and Archbishops Ryan and McNamara let down those families who, because they were good Catholics, trusted the Church to do something about this man. Archbishop McNamara was slow to respond to the complaint from the Rundles despite the priest admitting sexual abuse. As a result, Fr Naughton was allowed to continue his abusive behaviour for several years thereby severely damaging more victims. It was only when they went to the Gardaí that they finally received satisfaction.

29.57 The Archdiocese was, at best, evasive in its referrals of Fr Naughton for medical treatment in Ireland. Nowhere was there a full revelation of its concerns or its knowledge. In particular, following the first report from the first psychiatrist who saw him, which was clearly based on wrong information, the Archbishop's response was merely to write a note thanking the psychiatrist for his most helpful report. Fr Naughton was then going to be retained in his ministry. It was not until the next complaint surfaced, which in fact happened the following month, that he was sent to Stroud to which a full report was provided.

29.58 The Archdiocese did, however belatedly, act correctly in the view of the Commission, in arranging for Fr Naughton to live with his former Society when the Ringsend complaints were made. Dismissing him then would have led to a situation where he could have continued his activities unsupervised. Returning him to live with his former Society meant that his activities could be strictly monitored and controlled. Indeed, his former Society is to be commended for accepting him.

29.59 Fr Naughton's case is symptomatic of the Dublin Archdiocese's attitude to child sexual abuse in the 1980s. Until the problem became so great it could not be hidden, the archdiocesan procedure was to do all in its power to protect the wrongdoer, while almost completely ignoring the effect of this abuse on the victims. Monsignor Stenson states that the aim was to rehabilitate the wrongdoer rather than to protect him. Regardless of the aim in respect of the wrongdoer, the welfare of the children was not addressed. As a result Fr Naughton was allowed to continue his abuse for several years after legitimate concerns were first raised. This would not have happened if the Archdiocese had fulfilled its duty to the children in the first instance.

29.60 There was good communication between the Archdiocese and St Patrick's Missionary Society throughout.

The Garda response

29.61 Once formal complaints were made to Gardaí they responded positively. The Commission considers that it was unfortunate that they failed to attend the meeting arranged by the acting director of community care following complaints about Fr Naughton's behaviour in Ringsend. Had they

attended they would have been alerted earlier to the fact that these south Dublin complaints were not the only ones against Fr Naughton.

29.62 The Commission acknowledges that the Rundles and the mother of one Ringsend complainant did not want the Gardaí involved initially, believing that the Church authorities would handle matters.

Health board

29.63 The health board staff – the acting director of community care, the social workers and the public health nurse – acted with commendable speed and courage in dealing with this case. It is one of the very few cases examined by the Commission where the health authorities were proactive in trying to prevent abuse. The Commission recognises that the health authorities are often constrained by resources and their legal remit in taking such action (see Chapter 6).