

NEWSLETTER

EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS

Sinead McDonnell, Child Protection Officer with the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service (CSPS), read a prayer at the Opening Ceremony of the Eucharistic Congress on 10 June.

The prayer was composed by a survivor of abuse for the Liturgy of Lament and Repentance that was held in St. Mary's Pro Cathedral, Dublin, on 20 February 2011. That Liturgy asked the forgiveness of those who were abused as children by priests and religious.

It acknowledged the failure of Church leaders and others in the family of the Church to protect those who were abused, and to respond with compassion, understanding, love and integrity to the pain and distress of survivors.

Lord we are so sorry for what some of us did to your children; treated them so cruelly, especially in their hour of need. We have left them with a lifelong suffering. This was not your plan for them or us. Please help us to help them. Guide us, Lord, Amen.


This prayer was inscribed on a Healing Stone that was placed in front of the main altar at the Congress, where it was blessed by Archbishop Martin. The Healing Stone is a large piece of Wicklow granite. Following discussions involving many people, including survivors of abuse, it was agreed that it would be an appropriate symbol for the Congress.

The Healing Stone has now been given a permanent home in Lough Derg. Cardinal Ouellet, the Papal Legate at the Congress, made a pilgrimage there as part of the Congress. Lough Derg's Station Island, often referred to as St. Patrick's Purgatory, has been a place of pilgrimage for over 1000 years and Cardinal Ouellet's penitential journey there binds it closely to the 2012 Dublin Eucharistic Congress.

The suffering of those who were abused as children was recalled by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin in his opening address to the Congress. It was acknowledged and addressed at other moments during the Congress, including the meeting with survivors, and the pilgrimage to Lough Derg,



Photograph by Des McMahon



undertaken by Cardinal Ouellet and the address given by Archbishop Tagle of Manila entitled: *The Abuse of Children: Accepting Responsibility, Bringing Healing*.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to attend the Congress experienced a joyful moment of coming together in love and

celebration. To borrow the words of the Congress hymn, though we were many, we were one body. In his closing greeting, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, said that the Congress had been a time of renewal that had exceeded our plans and expectations. He continued: "In these days we have kept in our prayers and in our hearts all

those who suffered criminal abuse within the community of Christ's Church and all those who feel in any way alienated from the Church and who have not experienced in our Church the love of Jesus Christ. We go away from here committed to build a Church of communion and service after the model of Jesus Christ".

Safeguarding Children in Crosscare

Lorraine Byrne. Social Worker

Crosscare Child Safeguarding Officer

Crosscare is the Social Care Agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. Founded in 1941, Crosscare offers a range of services to adults, young people and children throughout the Archdiocese. Our services respond to a wide range of issues and full information can be seen on www.crosscare.ie. Some of our services work directly with children and young people, others work with adults who may be parents, and Crosscare also accepts placements from Transition Year students.

My role as Safeguarding Officer in Crosscare is to support staff members in reporting child protection concerns in line with Crosscare's Child Protection Policy. I am a trainer in the Child Safeguarding training Package of the Archdiocese and as such I provide training to staff and volunteers around Safeguarding issues. This is a wonderful part of my role which I very much enjoy. I learn as much from each session as the participants. My role also involves keeping a record of all concerns forwarded to the HSE and following up as necessary. On many occasions the issues involving children and young people known to our services are beyond immediate child protection concerns. Regularly there are welfare issues, for example, homeless parents which require a broader intervention than reporting to HSE duty Social Work. This is where the work can be challenging for all concerned. People in contact with Crosscare services are often already experiencing difficulties in their lives and it can take a very delicate professional approach and work by the professionals involved to support them around the reporting of child protection issues.

Historical disclosures of abuse are an issue of concern for many of our services. Often our clients have had very difficult experiences in the past and may find that their time in Crosscare provides them with the connection and safety with a professional service to disclose abuse from their childhood for the first time. Crosscare supports our clients in these situations by encouraging them to avail of counselling and to work with the client on making a report to the authorities. This can be a very painful process for the client, and needs to move at a respectful pace; however it also needs to be considered if there are children currently at risk which is, of course, the paramount concern.

The final element of my role is a dual element of Monitoring of standards and Child Safeguarding. I monitor Significant Events which occur within Echlin House our Children's Residential Centre. These events are any occurrence for a young resident which is significant in their life-this may be an educational achievement, or, on occasion, more difficult issues. These events are recorded on a special form and communicated to the Social Worker assigned to their case within the HSE. Child Protection concerns would also be reviewed in my monitoring meeting with Echlin House and Fiona Barry the Senior Services Manager.

The role of Safeguarding Children within Crosscare has received great support within Crosscare from Staff and the Senior Management Team. In this time of legislative change I look forward to continuing to review and maximise the role.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AGAINST PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE

This guide to Diocesan procedures was produced by the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service earlier this year. It sets out in detail how the Diocese deals with an allegation of child abuse against a priest of the Diocese from the point where information about the allegation first comes to the attention of the Diocese. Since March of this year, Fr. Des Doyle, Priest Delegate, and Andrew Fagan, Director of CSPS, have been going around meeting with groups of priests to explain these procedures.

There are 16 deaneries in Dublin Diocese. Each comprises a group of parishes in a particular geographic area within the Diocese. Meetings of deaneries take place on a quarterly basis. Priests of the parishes that make up the deanery are invited to these meetings, which are sometimes also attended by

other members of parish teams including parish sisters and parish pastoral workers.

It is these meetings that Fr. Des and Andrew have been attending to explain the procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against priests. This was prompted by awareness that these procedures were not well understood in the Diocese.

THIS LACK OF UNDERSTANDING WAS CREATING ANXIETY AMONG SOME PRIESTS, AND ALSO AMONG THE LAY FAITHFUL.

In particular, there was a concern that the rights of these priests may not always have been recognised and safeguarded.

These meetings have provided a welcome opportunity to explain clearly how a complaint that a priest has abused a child is processed within the Diocese. Fr. Des describes the steps that he takes, as Priest Delegate, to ensure that the priest against whom the complaint is made understands his rights. Fr. Des makes sure that the priest concerned has access to civil and

canon law advice and also identifies a fellow priest who will support him through the process of assessment and investigation.

When priests and laity learn that a priest has been asked to step aside from his ministry this usually comes as a sudden and traumatic shock. What people cannot know, because of the confidentiality of the process, is the steps that are taken leading up to this point. These meetings have provided a valuable opportunity to explain these steps and to reassure people that, for example, no decision on requesting a priest to stand aside from his ministry is taken until the priest concerned has been provided with an account of the complaint that has been made against him and an opportunity to present his side of the story.

The Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse against Priests of the Diocese is available online. In the 'Guidance' section of the CSPS website (www.csp.s.dublindiocese.ie) there is a 'drop down' menu. The first heading is 'Dublin Diocese Guidelines' and contains two items. The second of these is the new Procedure.

TOPICS FOR FORTHCOMING REPORTS

If there is a topic or issue that you would like to see discussed in forthcoming reports please email your suggestions to: andrew.fagan@dublindiocese.ie.