



NEWSLETTER

THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST DELEGATE



Fr Des Doyle (pictured) stepped down from his position as Priest Delegate for the diocese at the end of January and was replaced by Fr Richard Shannon.

The Priest Delegate plays a vital role in dealing with allegations of child abuse against priests of the diocese. He ensures that the priest against whom such an allegation is made ('the Respondent') is informed of his rights and has access to advice and support.

The Priest Delegate arranges a Priest Advisor to be on hand when the complaint is being put to the Respondent. The Priest Advisor is present with the Respondent, if he so wishes, while he hears the

allegation of child abuse that has been made against him. He helps the Respondent make sense of what is going on and provides him, both then and throughout the process of assessment and investigation, with moral and spiritual support.

The Priest Delegate is also present when the Respondent hears the complaint that has been made against him. He ensures that the Respondent understands his rights. He provides him with a list of civil and canon lawyers. He explains to the Respondent that he can give his response to the complaint immediately; at a later time after consulting with a civil and/ or canon lawyer; or not at all. The Priest Delegate also informs the Respondent that if he does choose to give a response to the allegation, his response will be carefully considered when it comes to making any decision about whether to restrict or suspend his ministry, pending full investigation of the complaint.

For any priest there can be few experiences more devastating than hearing that he has been accused of abusing a child. Nobody understood this better than Des Doyle. He ensured that the meetings at which the Respondent priest heard the complaints made against him were conducted in a humane and respectful manner. Des understood that a man in such a situation does not have the presence of mind to ask

all the questions that need to be asked when a complaint of this nature is put to him. Des put these questions to the Director of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service in the presence of the Respondent so that the Respondent could learn about the likely consequences of the complaint for the continuation of his ministry and other related matters. Des always followed up on these meetings to ensure that the Respondent was getting the support that he needed.

Des did all of this without compromising in any way the principle that in all of these matters the paramount consideration is, and must always remain, the safety of children and their protection from all forms of abuse.

Apart from being an excellent Priest Delegate, Des was a friend to all of us in the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service. In the most difficult of situations he always managed to raise our spirits with his infectious sense of fun, as well as his deep faith and trust in the love and mercy of God. We have lost a colleague but retained a friend. We congratulate the people of Swords for their good fortune in having Des as their newly appointed Parish Priest.

Richard Shannon has quickly established himself as a worthy successor as Priest Delegate. We have already been enriched by his compassion and insight.

NEW CEO OF NATIONAL BOARD FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND (NBSCCCI)



Teresa Devlin has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of the NBSCCCI. Teresa had been acting CEO since Ian Elliott retired last year. Teresa joined NBSCCCI as Director of Safeguarding in 2008.

Teresa is well known to us in Dublin and we are happy to continue our well established professional relationship. We have sought her advice on many occasions. Fr Paddy worked closely with Teresa in developing the new safeguarding training. Most recently Teresa was part of the team that carried out an audit of our safeguarding policies and practices, the report of which will be published after Easter.

Teresa comes from County Derry and has two children. A social worker, Teresa has extensive experience in the fields of child protection and children's rights.

We are confident that Teresa will do a great job and we wish her well with it.

DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Book Review: Intimate Enemies: Violence and Reconciliation in Peru. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

This book will be of interest to anyone wanting to learn how people come to terms with very traumatic events.

Kimberly Theidon is an anthropologist who spent many years living with the indigenous people of Peru, studying the after-effects of the rise and suppression of the left wing guerrilla movement, the Shining Path. Even by the standards of Latin American guerrilla movements, the Shining Path were extremely violent. They instituted a reign of terror in those villages over which they took control, killing those they saw as representative of the system they sought to overthrow. The government was initially slow to respond but once it did swing into action and handed responsibility for the suppression of Shining Path to the army, the results were scarcely less atrocious. The army committed appalling human rights abuses. Many innocent people with no connection to Shining Path, including children, were killed. There was widespread sexual violence. A subsequent Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimated that of the 70,000 people who were killed during the civil conflict, half were killed by Shining Path and a third by the state.

The focus of Theidon's study is on how victims of violence came to terms with what had happened to them and to their loved ones and how those who had perpetrated crimes within

their own communities were reintegrated into those communities. The book deals with issues of reparation, reconciliation, retribution and forgiveness. The experience was different in different communities and, to some degree, depended on the actions and attitudes of the offenders.

Some people returned to their villages and were accepted despite having done, or been associated with, terrible things. Key to their acceptance was an acknowledgement on their part of wrong-doing. They were brought before village assemblies, questioned about their deeds, and given an opportunity to apologise. It would seem that the villagers made some judgment as to the sincerity of these apologies before deciding whether they could once again become accepted members of the village communities. There was an element of coercion at these assemblies and some former guerrillas were threatened and sometimes beaten to encourage them to acknowledge their crimes. Theidon in no way tries to justify this but she does make a distinction between retribution which is exacted by the community in controlled circumstances and vengeance where an individual takes it upon him or herself to punish the wrongdoer. Remarkably, she found no instances of former guerrillas being killed in acts of revenge.

The government offered an amnesty to some former guerrillas who were then allowed to return to their villages. Given that they had been in some senses 'officially forgiven' some of these people felt under no obligation to make peace with their neighbours. Many of those who had suffered personally at the hands of these people found it incredibly difficult to live alongside their former tormentors and to act as though nothing bad had ever happened.

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Ulcers were common in the villages Theidon visited and one medical practitioner told her that this was due to so many people having to 'swallow' their own anger and distress.

There is a lot of interest in restorative justice as a means of helping people who were abused by priests and religious. Restorative justice is less about righting the wrongs of the past (which is often impossible) and more about restoring and repairing relationships. The restoration of relationships is only possible when the wrong that has been done is acknowledged. In the villages of Peru, such restorative processes were clearly at work in some villages, especially in those situations where the former perpetrators engaged in reparative acts, such as doing voluntary work in the villages or assisting those who had lost a breadwinner.

Theidon allows the people who are the subjects of her study to tell their stories and they do so very movingly. She also acknowledges that the perpetrators have a story to tell and she criticises those who assume that it is only those who were victims of the terrible violence of the Shining Path uprising who have rights. Justice, she argues, is only possible when the rights of all are recognised and upheld.

This is necessarily a very short review of a very long and important book. Theidon has a lot of other interesting things to say on issues relevant to the work that we do with people who were abused by priests and religious. For example, she talks about the people who choose not to discuss the detail of the harm that was done to them. She questions what she describes as the 'tyranny of total recall' and describes how some of the

villagers had to 'remember to forget' in order to get ahead with their lives. She reminds us too that, while we rightly applaud the courage of those who have told their stories and acknowledge our debt to them, we should not assume that those who choose not to tell are in some way lacking in courage. "There are questions" she writes, "that we do not have the right to ask and silences must be respected".

This is not an easy book to read. Though Theidon consciously avoids dwelling on the detail of what was done to the victims of violence, the subject matter is, nonetheless, harrowing. Theidon also writes, at times, in a technical language particularly when comparing her work with that of other anthropologists. For all that, this is an important book that repays the effort required to read and understand it.

Advice to parishes on groups using parish property to run activities for children

We are often asked by parishes about how to deal with child safeguarding issues with non parish groups who use parish property to run activities for children.

This advice has been developed in consultation with the diocese's insurers and solicitors. The general principle is that the obligation to comply with requirements relating to Garda vetting and child safeguarding rests with the group using parish property, not with the parish.

1. It is the responsibility of any group using parish property to run activities involving children to ensure that they comply with all applicable child safeguarding and protection laws and guidelines.
2. The group should have a child safeguarding policy and procedures. The group is responsible for liaising with the relevant statutory authority to ensure that the policy meets the requirements.
3. The parish should obtain a copy of the group's child safeguarding policy and keep this on file as evidence that the parish satisfied itself that the group possesses such a policy.
4. The parish should explain to the group in question that taking a copy of their child safeguarding policy does not imply that the parish endorses it. Such approval can only be given by the civil authorities.

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.