



NEWSLETTER

NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS

During 2015 Archbishop Martin asked the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service and the diocesan Safeguarding Committee to take on responsibility for safeguarding of vulnerable adults in the Diocese.

As reported in the last issue of the Newsletter, the Diocese is due to produce a revised version of Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures during 2016. The revision of this document was held over until the completion of the revised version of Safeguarding Children. This is the document, prepared and published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) which sets out the child safeguarding and protection policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Originally published in 2008, it was revised and updated in 2015 and the new version is due to be published shortly.

The remit of the NBSCCCI does not extend to vulnerable adults. We propose to prepare a safeguarding document for the Archdiocese of Dublin that incorporates the Church's

policy for the safeguarding of children and expands on it to include vulnerable adults.

This will be a new departure for the Diocese. It will have implications across a range of areas, including training in our parishes and diocesan agencies. We will also have to develop guidance for areas such as visiting of elderly people in their homes.

2016 also marks a new beginning for the diocesan Safeguarding Committee. The term of office of the first Committee expired at the end of 2015 and the new Committee meets for the first time in March. Many of those who served on the first Committee are continuing with the new Committee. We acknowledge with considerable gratitude the contribution of Mandy Nordell and Walter Balfe. We welcome Frances Stephenson, Natalie Doherty and Michele Kehoe. We are very happy, also, that Aidan Browne has agreed to continue as Chair of the Committee.

A REPORT, A BOOK AND A FILM

In this edition of the Newsletter we consider a review of safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Scotland, a book about five women who spent time in a Magdalene Laundry and a film about how the Boston Globe newspaper uncovered the extent of clerical sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Boston. Common themes emerge from all of these three works and they have important lessons for us.

The McLellan Commission:

A review of the current safeguarding policies, procedures and practice within the Catholic Church in Scotland

The Catholic Church in Scotland, like the Catholic Church in many other countries, has had to face the reality of the abuse of children by priests and religious. The Bishops' Conference requested the Very Reverend Dr Andrew McLellan, a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to chair the commission. This was a courageous decision, one that Dr McLellan describes in his

preface as a demonstration of "ecumenical trust, which could not have been guessed at in Scotland thirty years ago".

Dr McLellan brings a perspective to the issue that is sometimes lacking when it is viewed from a purely secular or civil perspective. One of the key recommendations of the report is that we need a theology of safeguarding that sets out its centrality in the life and work of the Church. In

our work with parishes we see clearly the difference between those who understand safeguarding as something we do (somewhat reluctantly) such as filling up forms and putting up notices and those who regard safeguarding as becoming part of who and what we are as a Christian community.

The report deals with the issue of telling the truth about the abuse of children in the Catholic Church. It quotes from Pope St Gregory 1: *"If people are scandalised at the truth, it is better to allow the birth of scandal than to abandon the truth"*.

This, as described in the report, is not just a matter of facing up to the appalling reality that priests and religious sexually abused children, it is also about telling the truth about what happened in particular cases. The report quotes a letter from a survivor to a bishop. She wrote: *"In the past when your organisation has not responded to my questions, or taken months/years to answer, I have felt confused, angry, despairing and hopeless, as it seems that I am not being heard and I don't matter"*.

Phil Saviano, a Boston survivor, who features in the film 'Spotlight' is seen describing to the journalists from the Boston Globe that child sexual abuse is also spiritual abuse. The report states that for many who were abused as children: *"All of the authority of the Church appears to survivors to be on the side of the abuser. For many survivors it becomes impossible to continue to trust in God. For those who continue in faith, such faith is almost never bright, life enhancing, liberating or hopeful"*.

One of the saddest aspects of the report is how often the survivors were left feeling alone and abandoned by the Church. One survivor said: *"When, years later, one nun took my hand and said "I'm sorry for what happened to you" that was the closest the Church ever came to reaching out and showing me compassion"*.

When it comes to working with survivors one of the key messages from this report is that such simple expressions of regret can count for a lot. Another is the importance of asking the question: what can I do to help?

'Spotlight' on the Media

The film 'Spotlight' opened in Ireland on the last weekend in January. It tells the story of how a team of investigative reporters from the Boston Globe newspaper uncovered the extent of clerical child abuse in the Archdiocese of Boston, the practice of moving abusing priests from parish to parish and the systematic efforts to keep knowledge of all of this out of sight of the general public.

The film makes uncomfortable viewing for Catholics but it is far from being an anti-Church rant. Rather than telling us things we did not know, it reminds us of what we always knew but sometimes are in danger of forgetting. One such is that those who tell us uncomfortable truths cannot be ignored just because they are awkward to deal with or are seen as having an 'agenda' or even their own 'personal issues'.



The reasons why some people in Boston looked the other way when they encountered evidence of abuse are examined. Some did not want to undermine the Church and its otherwise positive contribution to the city of Boston. Others seem to have tried to alert others to what was going on but then gave up when nobody seemed to be paying attention. There is a particularly dramatic scene in the film where those working on the story have to come to terms with the fact that the paper itself had information that was ignored or overlooked in the past.

The film has been described as a 'hymn to investigative journalism'. It is a reassertion of the important role of the news media in the protection of children. We have previously

drawn attention to the courageous work of the journalist, Andrew Norfolk, who uncovered the extent of the sexual abuse of young girls in Rotherham in England in 2014. There are many similarities in the stories of Rotherham and Boston. Many in Boston did not want to highlight the problem of abusing priests because it might undermine the Catholic Church. Many in Rotherham did not want to highlight the fact that gangs of men, mainly of Pakistani origin, were involved in the systemic abuse of children for fear that it would stoke up racial tensions.

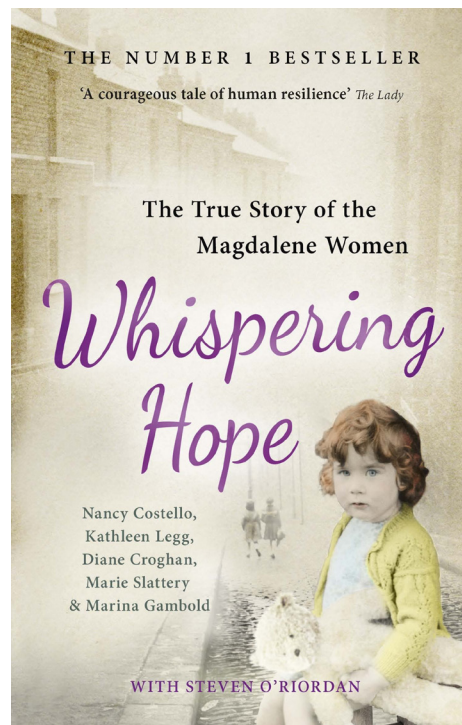
Sometimes people do the wrong things with good intentions. Sometimes, also, there can be a failure to see the big picture. In the scene from *Spotlight*, described above, the editor, who is new to the post, reminds the team that often we are feeling our way in the dark. It is only when someone turns on the light that we can see clearly what we are dealing with. Not every failure to detect systematic abuse of children is evidence of a cover up. Sometimes we need someone to turn on the light so we can see what is going on. That's one very good reason why we need the news media.

Book Review 'Whispering Hope'

This book tells the story of five women who spent time in Magdalene laundries. They are sad stories from a dark chapter in our history, our fairly recent history at that. It is a story some of which we know already. For that very reason some potential readers may be initially deterred from reading it, as this reviewer was. This, however, is an uplifting book and one that leaves you feeling lighter and more hopeful at the end of it.

The hope comes from the resilience of the women, their determination to make lives for themselves, the love they brought into the lives of others, partners, children, friends. So much was taken from them but they retained the capacity to give to others.

The book is structured around a particular event, or series of events. The women came together for a particular purpose. That purpose was achieved when they received an apology from Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, and a scheme for compensation was put in place by the government. This structure, with the stories all converging on a particular happy outcome skews the book and the stories of the women in a particular direction. One has to wonder how many others there were who did not live to see that day or who live lonely and desperate lives still. This does not, however, invalidate the book and the stories it contains. These women had their moment of affirmation and it was the least that they deserved.



The stories of how the women came to be in the Magdalene Laundries and what happened to them there are desperately sad. Though all of the stories are different, two themes come to the fore in all of them. One is loneliness. Even though the women lived in large institutions, they were not allowed to talk to each other. Separated from loved ones they were deprived of the comfort that they could have offered each other. The other theme is shame. The women were made to feel ashamed of themselves. This was not accidental. The purpose of the institutions was understood to be penitential. They were told they were doing penance and, throughout the book, there are examples of even apparently kindly people urging them to accept the need to 'do penance'. There is a suggestion in the book that this was linked to a theology that went out of fashion after the Second Vatican Council. This is difficult to understand. All of the women who tell their stories in this book were innocent of the circumstances of their admission. It seems much more likely that the institutions functioned as a repository for some of those people Irish society could not find a place for at that time. The idea that they were there for their own good would have been a lot easier for the rest of society to cope with than the idea that they were the victims of our rejection and neglect.

The shame did not leave the women when they left the Laundries. They carried it with them throughout their lives, often keeping secret from their own nearest and dearest the knowledge that they had been in a Magdalene Laundry. It was only the telling of the truth that set them free of this

shame. This was the acknowledgement contained in the Taoiseach's apology, given on 19 February 2013, that they had been placed in the Magdalene Laundries not because they had failed but because Irish society had failed them.

The book is notable in another respect too. Strangers were

kind to these women, sometimes in small ways, sometimes in big ways. These acts of kindness, big or small, were very significant in their lives. It is something that is found in other, similar stories. It is a reminder of the importance of not turning away. No act of kindness is wasted, even if its worth is not immediately apparent.

TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR 2016

DECEMBER		
Date	Venue	Time
5 March	Holy Cross Diocesan Centre, Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3	09:30 – 15:30
16 April	Holy Cross Diocesan Centre, Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3	09:30 – 15:30
14 May	Kilcullen Parish Centre	09:30 – 15:30
28 May	Holy Cross Diocesan Centre, Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3	09:30 – 15:30
24 September	Wicklow Town	09:30 – 15:30
8 October	Holy Cross Diocesan Centre, Clonliffe Road	09:30 – 15:30
11 November	Holy Cross Diocesan Centre, Clonliffe Road	09:30 – 15:30

All of the above are open training sessions and a place can be booked with Geraldine Tierney: 01 8360314 or cps@dublindiocese.ie

Other training sessions have been organised for particular parishes and groups. We will try to accommodate requests for training for specific groups but we would also encourage people to attend open training sessions.

Parish Information Sessions

One of our key goals in the Child Safeguarding & Protection Service is to roll out as many Parish Information Sessions as possible in 2016. The session lasts a maximum of two hours and should be attended by all parish volunteers except for those in key roles, who should attend the One Day Programme (see above). It is a great opportunity to update volunteers on safeguarding in their parish and within the Diocese.

The sessions can be run in individual parishes during the morning, afternoon or evening time. Smaller parishes can come together in one venue if this suits.

For further information or to arrange a session, please contact Garry Kehoe at garry.kehoe@dublindiocese.ie or on **086-0841734**.

CONTACT DETAILS

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