

ALL THE BISHOPS' MEN, CLERICAL ABUSE IN AN IRISH DIOCESE, Tom Mooney, Collins Press, Cork, 2011

From Amazon, The lid is lifted on how a group of priests in Wexford were able to abuse children over a thirty-year period. Boys and girls were molested, raped, stripped of innocence and left devastated. Inept supervision by bishops, botched police investigations, weak sentences, and a philosophy of hear no evil, see no evil, allowed priests to sexually abuse at will. Fr Seán Fortune's suicide in 1999 set in train events in Ireland that led to the first voluntary resignation by a bishop in the Catholic Church in Western Europe, and precipitated the first State investigation of clerical abuse. The Ferns Report, which documented hundreds of allegations of abuse since 1966 against twenty-one priests of the Diocese of Ferns, sent shockwaves around the world. Eventually, a few good men said enough is enough. This is a searing indictment of the Catholic Church and the society that spawned and protected the abusers.

Page 49- Father Sean Fortune, Diocese of Ferns, committed suicide and thus avoided justice for the awful sex abuse he committed against many victims. He planned his suicide meticulously. He wrote a note in a poem format, called A Message from Heaven for My Family. He wrote on the top of it that it was to be read at his Requiem Mass. He took an overdose with a bottle of whiskey.

Page 50 - Fortune was found dead on his bed holding his rosary beads - "his rosary beads twined around his hands in prayer". His victim Colm O Gorman said that suicide was not cowardice but about ego - he didn't want to have to account for his actions to anybody for he considered himself too wonderful for that.

Page 159 - In 2002, Michael McDowell, Minister for Justice, determined that Canon Law was just like the internal sporting rules of an organisation such as the GAA. Cardinal Desmond Connell corrected this misunderstanding. The book says the Irish "Supreme Court recognised that canon law enjoyed the status of foreign law" according to the Cardinal. But it adds that "The truth, as usual with organised religion, was somewhere in between." The Law Society Gazette says, "It is correct to say that canon law is recognised as foreign law by the Irish courts where it governs a relationship that is at issue. It would not be correct to imply that this gives canon law precedence over civil law." The book quotes a priest who says that there is no conflict between state law and canon law on the basis that canon law commands that civil law must be obeyed unless it contradicts divine law.

Page 161, 162 - Crimen Sollicitationis was interpreted as proof by American Lawyers that the Catholic Church had made law that clerical sex abuse be covered up. The document decreed that the Secret of the Holy Office applies in cases of clerical sex abuses that are investigated by the Church. Those who broke confidentiality were punished by automatic excommunication from the Church and reckoned guilty of a sin that could only be absolved by the Pope. The Crimen rule applied to 2001. The document was about four kinds of sins, priests using the confessional to solicit for sex, sexual abuse of minors, homosexuality and bestiality. The book says that it "was viewed as ... an indication of an official policy of secrecy rather than a conspiracy to stay silent, was an archaically worded blueprint to help bishops discipline priests who, in the eyes of the Church, had forsaken their chastity".

Page 163 says Crimen decreed that how the investigation was conducted that was to remain secret not the abuse.

Page 166 states that Pope Benedict in his letter to Irish Catholics, apologised for how the Irish bishops handled cases of clerical sex abuse. He did not even mention the Vatican's part in all this.

COMMENT: Fortune definitely believed his faith condoned his evil actions and that he would go to Heaven. This shows the danger of endorsing an irrational religious faith - some people end up more irrational than the pope! The Irish state should not recognise Canon Law as the law of a foreign state. Canon Law is for a worldwide organisation - not merely the Vatican. And Canon Law must have precedence over state law for state law does not enjoy the same guidance from God as it supposedly does. How the book can say that Crimen was about helping to manage immoral priests is baffling in the light of the fact that there were such severe penalties against the accuser if he or she breaks the secret. And why apply the Secret of the Holy Office and not a vow of confidentiality? Why was there no requirement to report the offender to the civil authorities?



