

Open Letter to Bishop Boyce, February 2010, Highland Radio, Letterkenny, Co Donegal

With regard to the report in Donegal on Sunday 21 February 2010, Bishop Boyce, please stop trying to deceive us into thinking that the meeting between the Pope and the 24 bishops was intended to be anything other than a display by a self-serving Church leadership.

No matter what you say, the pope meeting with the bishops concerning clerical child sex abuse is not about the victims. The pope is meeting the bishops, those who share a collective responsibility for what has happened to them, not the victims.

What use is the papal condemnation of child abuse as a serious sin that you mention? What use is it when the sin is forgiven so easily as if it were nothing? Your gospels have Jesus say that we must forgive a person seventy times a day and that those who don't forgive don't get any forgiveness from God. This indicates that the victims are despised and worse off than the perpetrators for all the perpetrator has to do is ask God for pardon and gets it while the victim has to struggle for a lifetime to forgive. The Church says we are to despise sin above all evils. When you hate somebody's sin it feels personal. It is the kind of person doing the bad action that you hate. It's ridiculous to pretend that it is the action you hate. Love the sinner and hate the sin is a licence for hating people as long as you refuse to admit it even to yourself. We have enough to worry about without worrying about what God says about us and about how our sins offend him! There is enough in life to impact badly on our self-esteem without that!

We take offence at you saying you would welcome any investigation into the Raphoe Diocese's handling of clerical sexual abuse allegations. Of course you would when the records are non-existent. Until you explain why the paper trial was gone when Martin Ridge investigated we can assume that senior clergy of the Diocese must have been disposing of the evidence. His book *Breaking the Silence* spoke of the conspiracy among top clerics in the Diocese to keep clerical child abuse under wraps.

How dare you say, "If you look at the last ten years the amount of abuse that took place is practically nil". This is Donegal. Many parts of Donegal are still immersed in the clericalism and fanatical respect for priests that intimidates clerical child abuse victims and keeps them silent.

In Bible times, girls were married before they were fully matured and would have often given birth at 14. Mary is stated to have been one of those girls. God made her pregnant when she was only a child herself. Isn't that the kind of doctrine that will soothe what is left of a paedophile priest's conscience?

Offensive teachings such as that babies are cut off from God until God's spirit is put into them by baptism are hardly conducive to genuine respect for children. A paedophile priest who confesses and gets forgiven by God after carrying out abuse will go to Heaven unlike the baby that dies unbaptised! Parents love their babies not because of such teachings but despite them. If we wish to get rid of abuse, we must get rid of any doctrine that smacks of spiritual abuse. If that means abandoning the Church for a kinder faith then we should! If God is love then he expects us to do so for his sake! Picking and choosing what one likes out of Catholicism and calling oneself Catholic is not an option. Either one believes the Church is God's mouthpiece or one don't. You agree with that and the logic is impeccable.

When are the bishops and the pope going to get rid of official teachings that encourage the culture of secrecy that facilitates the abuse? I am referring to the Catholic teaching that it is a virtue to manipulate people into taking the wrong interpretation of one's statements to avoid lying. For example, a priest can answer when asked if he raped a child "I am not guilty of that crime" though he did it, meaning he was absolved of it in confession and thus is no longer guilty. We have seen the horrific results of such reasoning in the Murphy Report. Also the Church teaches that you can get forgiveness simply by going to confession when you fear the punishment of Hell. This is a great comfort to the paedophile priest who fears everlasting torment rather than his sin. In fact it is pretty close to a reward!

If the idea of God is leading men to believe that they were made paedophiles and born that way for one of God's mysterious plans then the idea of God needs to be dumped. There is much evidence that many clerical abusers felt holy as they abused. Given that Jesus said that loving God and believing in him was the supreme commandment and that loving your neighbour as yourself was only secondary in importance is it any wonder that people would feel the need to cover up scandals so that they could protect God's Church? To look up to someone who told us by law we must love God completely and more than the people we see and touch every day is unhealthy. He didn't tell us to love God for we need something to love above all things. He didn't tell us for our sake but God's. If it was for us he might have ordered us to love God or some outstanding role model above all things so that we might become like them. To love God above all things would mean you love him with most of your powers or love many but love him the best. Jesus rejected that. Like a true bully, Jesus makes it essential that we love only God and not just this way but with all our powers - an impossible soul-destroying ideal. An ideal that

would encourage the religious paedophile to sin out of sheer frustration.

The priests of the diocese of Raphoe should not have taken up the Christmas Gift Collection last year. This money goes to them and of course the undeserving senior clergy who have let the likes of Eugene Greene run riot. Instead there should have been collections to support the victims of clerical child sex abuse. The clergy still think of themselves despite wringing their hands and telling us of their horror and grief at what the victims suffered. We want to see action not words and not certainly not performances! Where are the priests and bishops who testify for and support the victims?

The biggest concern about many religions is how manipulative the religions are. Why should we believe that the Catholic Church is any different?

It is true that any religion can do wrong but when a religion does wrong to the magnitude that we have seen in the Roman Catholic Church I see no option but to get rid of my responsibility for its crimes. I can only do that by leaving the Church by formal defection. As long as my name is in its books as a member I am supporting the Church in a real sense. I am contributing to its power. I am helping it to abuse.