

CONTEXT RAPHOE DIOCESE COVERED UP FOR CLERICAL SEX ABUSE BY FR GREENE: FROM MARTIN RIDGE'S BOOK, BREAKING THE SILENCE

Seeing the BBC Spotlight special on Eugene Greene in October 2002 prompted one Donegal priest, Columba Nee, to put pen to paper. In a letter headlined 'Response to Sexual Abuse Allegations Woefully Inadequate', published in the Donegal News on 8 November 2002, Nee wrote about the effect that revelations about clerical sexual abuse cases had on the Church and on him personally. 'I grew up in the 1970s before the issue of child sexual abuse emerged out into the open. I remember my parents warning me about strangers offering sweets or enticing me into cars. I never considered for a second that one day I might belong to a profession that, in the eyes of many, is a haven for paedophiles', Nee's letter began. He wrote about the snide comments he and colleagues had to face because of the Greene and other cases, but observed that the crisis the Church faced was largely self-inflicted and 'often made worse by coverups, lame excuses and, worst of all, silence from Church leaders'. Most priests were good men, and only a small minority has carried out 'ferocious crimes against children', including Greene, 'a serial rapist who wrecked and destroyed the lives of scores of young boys over roughly twenty-five years'. Greene's crimes, Nee wrote, were 'sickening and revolting and cannot be excused in any way'. What upset Nee most though was the 'woeful' response of the Church to questions posed by the Spotlight programme. In particular the lack of diocesan files, which could explain for example why Greene was brought out of semi-retirement, troubled him. Nee noted that the Hussey Commission into clerical abuse, chaired by retired District Court Judge Gillian Hussey, would not have to spend much time in Donegal, since it relied on paper files to get to the truth. 'Have files been destroyed or were complaints never recorded?' he asked. He described how his faith in Church leaders had been shaken by the way paedophile priests were handled. The Church needed to learn from the disaster, bring it out in the open and deal with it honestly. Those who covered up or ignored crimes shared in the guilt, as did those who 'passed the buck and made pathetic excuses in the face of sheer evil'. Nee's words burned with passion. He spoke on behalf of many ordinary Catholics who felt shocked and betrayed by the Church, and many ordinary priests who shared their feelings. He compared their outrage to the righteous anger Jesus felt when he entered the temple in Jerusalem and found it violated by traders and money-changers. 'People need to know that many ordinary priests share their outrage and disappointment,' he concluded. 'I wonder will anything really ever change in our Church? Time will tell.' Not every priest I spoke to saw things with Nee's piercing clarity. One said to me of McGinley: 'Cha n-ólann Denis bocht is cha gcaitheann sé.' (Sure poor Denis doesn't drink or smoke.) I couldn't see how this was a point in his favour after what he had done, but clearly the speaker felt that it excused or lessened his guilt in some way. Several people afterwards made a big thing of Greene's drink problem, but the strange argument was made that as McGinley was a Pioneer, he must in some way have been a good person because he didn't drink or smoke. It made no sense. When I spoke to another priest about my dismay at the glowing character references that two priests, John McGlynn and Michael Sweeney, had given for McGinley, his answer was 'Sure is cara mór le Fr Michael, Denis.' (Michael is a great friend of Denis.) I was even told that in one parochial house in a parish where Greene had worked as a curate, his photograph still hung prominently. Quite what the parishioner who saw the photograph of the convicted serial rapist hanging proudly on the wall thought of it, I'm not sure. The message it must send to any of Greene's victims who might see it doesn't bear thinking about.

Police work is all about gathering evidence, whether a tin of paint and some brushes or a witness statement or the paperwork from a report to a health board official or a diocesan office of suspected wrongdoing to support a criminal complaint. Yet in investigating Greene we were hampered by the lack of evidence. There were reports raising concerns in 1971, again in 1976 and twice in 1995 that I knew about, either from our own investigation or what Spotlight had uncovered. In November 1995 Bishop Boyce was told about the concerns over Greene's conduct, yet there was nothing in the diocesan files. Nee hit the nail on the head when he asked, 'Have files been destroyed or were complaints never recorded?' Why was nothing ever written down? Over the years I had been given tantalising pieces of information which suggested that there was an awareness at senior levels in the diocese of the problem, even if there were no written records. One priest told me he was present when a colleague approached a senior Church official expressing some concern about what Greene might have done, only to be rebuffed with the words, 'He couldn't have. He's cured.' Greene told us himself he was in Stroud in the early nineties. He gave us written permission to access his files there. Yet Stroud later refused to release the files on medical grounds, after consulting with the priest and his lawyers, saying he was treated for alcohol dependency, not psychosexual problems. When Greene gave us permission to get his medical records, he was under no illusion and neither were we about which files we were talking about, and he had nodded to us accordingly. We understood, as any criminal investigator would, that we were dealing with child sexual abuse.

In 1982 a new bishop, Seamus Hegarty, succeeded McFeely in the Raphoe diocese. Meanwhile Greene continued to prey on young boys in Glenties, then in Gaoth Dobhair, then moving on to Cill Mhic Réanáin where he was promoted to parish priest. 'Most unusually', the Spotlight documentary noted, 'Greene's new job was subject to a review after three years.' In

1994 Greene moved to live in semi-retirement in Loch an Iúir. When Hegarty was moved to Derry in 1994, the diocesan vicar general Fr Dan Carr acted for a while as temporary administrator to the diocese of Raphoe, and he brought Greene out of semi-retirement as an assistant priest. Spotlight discovered two more complaints from this period. 'One was in a letter sent to the diocesan headquarters outlining a specific allegation', it reported. 'The priest who sent it received no reply. The other complaint was made verbally by a curate to his parish priest. The senior priest in question denies he received any complaint. Fr Dan Carr denies he received any complaints. And this diocese says it has no complaints on file about Fr Greene.' Spotlight went on to report that 'serious worries' were circulating the following summer when Philip Boyce was appointed as bishop of Raphoe. The new bishop was told of 'grave concerns' about the priest at a special meeting in Anagaire parochial house in November 1995 called by the principal of the local primary school and the parish priest Fr Michael Herrity. In a statement to Spotlight the headmaster explained that 'allegations and rumours about Fr Greene and children were sweeping the parish'.

COMMENTS

The religious orders tend to be the worst offenders and do the most obvious covering up. In the case of Letterfrack in Co Galway Ireland the order denied knowing that one of its brothers was sexually abusing inmates though they had got many complaints over his fifteen year reign. The orders in Ireland are still not releasing documents that incriminate their members and many of these documents have been destroyed. It is not hard to see that this must have happened in the Raphoe Diocese where records relating to notorious paedophiles like Fr Eugene Greene have conveniently disappeared in the time of three bishops and a parish priest who ran the diocese in 1995-1996. Read the article by Raphoe Priest Fr Columba Nee [here](http://www.donegaltimes.com/2002/11_1/other.html)

There were letters sent by the victims to diocese leaders and the recipients denied that they ever got these letters. This was reported in the Donegal News in 2000. Bishop Hegarty currently bishop of Derry and formerly bishop of Raphoe was exposed as a protector of wicked priests particularly in a BBC1 current affairs programme Spotlight. His attitude in the programme came across as uncaring and arrogant and defensive. Spotlight exposed the manoeuvrings of the Raphoe diocese to prevent paedophile priests being brought to justice and especially how the clerics of the diocese gave no support or compassion and not even a visit to the families of the victims.

The blame is really with the parents who get their children baptised into the Catholic system and form them as priests.

From Breaking the Silence, One Garda's Quest to Find the Truth, Martin Ridge, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 2008 order from Gill & Macmillan, Hume Avenue, Park West, Dublin 12

APPENDIX

Pope Visit to Ireland, Where Scars of Sex Abuse Are 'Worse Than the I.R.A - New York Times

GORTAHORK, Ireland — If any place illustrates the depth and depravity of child sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church — and why the Irish are so angry about it — it is this unlikely corner of the country, where among rolling hills of wild heather, castles and bucolic fishing villages, predatory priests terrorized children with impunity for decades.

County Donegal, which overlooks the Atlantic in northwestern Ireland, has fewer than 160,000 residents, but it may have the worst record of clerical abuse in the country. According to a watchdog group that monitors the Catholic Church in Ireland, 14 priests have been accused in recent years, four of whom were convicted. They include the Rev. Eugene Greene, one of the nation's most notorious pedophile priests, who served nine years in prison for raping and molesting 26 boys between 1965 and 1982, though the real figure may be far higher.

Yet this year, when Pope Francis needed someone to head a neighboring diocese, he chose Bishop Philip Boyce, who had been heavily criticized for refusing to defrock Father Greene when the priest was under his management in the late 1990s.

As Francis prepares for a visit to Ireland this weekend — the first by a pope since John Paul II in 1979 — the painful specter of such abuses hangs over his trip, as well as the church's long history of protecting pedophile priests. It is cases like this one that many faithful say make it incumbent on Francis to give them not just words, but action.

That is true not only in Ireland, but also in the United States, where last week a grand jury in Pennsylvania released a sweeping report that the church had covered up the abuse of more than 1,000 minors by some 300 priests over 70 years. Francis himself acknowledged the global scale of the problem this week, when he issued a rare letter to Catholics worldwide condemning such "atrocities."

But the pope offered no specific remedies. Many Irish say they are now waiting not only for recognition of their suffering, but also for Francis to announce concrete measures to combat and punish such abuses. His record on the issue so far has left

them skeptical and angry, even in conservative, ardently Catholic Donegal — the only Irish county where a majority of voters rejected a measure in May to repeal an abortion ban.

Residents said Francis' appointment of Bishop Boyce demonstrated that the church's record of shuffling along abusers and those who protected them remained unbroken.

Bishop Boyce "was keen to protect the family of the convicted priest from further trauma by not initiating laicization," the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church found in a 2011 review

For those in Donegal, Bishop Boyce's appointment was salt in the wounds. Francis chose him to replace John McAreevey, who resigned as bishop of Dromore after coming under fire for officiating at the funeral of a priest he knew to be a pedophile. It is unclear whether Bishop McAreevey was disciplined by the church.

Bishop Boyce did not respond to requests for comment.

Father Greene, now in his 90s, is thought to be living in a protected home run by an ecclesiastical order in Cork and enjoying a "happy retirement," said John McAteer, the editor of the weekly Tírconaille Tribune. "I find it shocking," he said.

"Even in Donegal, it did a lot of damage," Jackie Hughes, a retired truck driver, said of the abuses and the church's handling of them. "They have destroyed homes. They have destroyed young men."

Some priests are "good," he said, adding, "There have been too many cover-ups. They seem to be in denial."

In his letter this week, Francis offered a forceful condemnation of the church's handling of the abuse crisis, but his words nonetheless disappointed many Catholics, including those in Donegal.

"Nothing has changed, sadly," said Colm O'Gorman, the executive director of Amnesty International Ireland, who is himself a survivor of clerical sexual abuse. "The reason why the church can't get a grip on the problem is because its primary concern is not to protect vulnerable adults and children but to protect the authority and reputation and the wealth of the institution."

The church's grip in Donegal was so strong that abuse was uncovered almost by accident, when Father Greene told the police that a young man was trying to blackmail him. That man had been abused by Father Greene.

Even so, revelations of clerical sexual abuse would not have fully emerged without the work of two semiretired detectives, whose efforts to listen to complainants led to Father Greene's arrest in 1998 and to investigations into other cases.

One of the detectives, Martin Ridge, had arrived in Donegal hoping to wind down after decades chasing Irish Republican Army militants, dealing with bombings and bank robberies.

"I opened up a can of worms," he said in an interview. Fighting the I.R.A. was a "conflict you could see with your eyes," he said. "This one, you couldn't. It's worse than the I.R.A., because it's like putting a bomb into a child's mind."

His superiors were so reluctant to take on sexual abuse cases that Mr. Ridge turned a room in his home into an office and bought himself a computer. "They washed their hands of it," he said. The victims, he added, "were dismissed as if they didn't matter. The power of the clergy was so strong."

Abuse victims distrustful of the police approached Mr. Ridge instead, recounting their experiences in deserted car parks and other isolated areas — often places where the abuse had occurred.

By the time Father Greene was arrested, Mr. Ridge said, at least 45 men had come forward with abuse accusations, including against a teacher who worked in a Catholic school. That teacher, Denis McGinley, served a two-year prison sentence in 2002 for abusing dozens of pupils over three decades.

According to "Breaking the Silence," a detailed account of the investigations co-written by Mr. Ridge, victims described how they were forced to masturbate their rapists. They were forcibly stripped, held down and repeatedly raped so violently that they bled for days afterward.

Many victims, groomed to such an extent that they believed sexual abuse was part of growing up, developed drinking problems and other addictions.

Donegal is riddled with landmarks of abuse, each telling its own tragedy.

In a cemetery in Gortahork, a small village near the coast, eight men are buried, all victims of clerical abuse who killed themselves. A few miles away, a 15-year-old abuse victim hanged himself in a shed.

Abuse took place in a school, at a secluded beach, in a grove of trees and behind the altar of a church on Inishboffin, an island that according to the most recent census has only 11 residents.

“It looks like the most innocent, idyllic scene,” Mr. Ridge said as he drove his car down a winding road that cut through craggy hills splashed with purple heather. A soft mist started to descend as the evening closed in, slowly swallowing gray cottages and barns.

“It’s hard to fathom that all these crimes were committed and covered up,” he said. “The audacity!” As he drove by the shed where the 15-year-old had killed himself, Mr. Ridge gripped the steering wheel before making a sign of the cross.

Father Greene told his victims: “It’s our secret. Only God will know.”

Martin Gallagher was 12 when he was first raped and molested by Father Greene, and the abuse continued for more than a year. He left school at 14 and started drinking at 16. He got sober only six years ago, at the age of 46.

“There’s something there that’s never going to go away,” Mr. Gallagher said in an interview. “You try to forget, but you can’t. It’s a thing you just need to have to live with, work around.”

He was 33 when he told Mr. Ridge about the abuse, the first time he had confided in anyone. He later discovered that two cousins had also been abused by Father Greene.

“At my age you didn’t have the sense to go to the police,” Mr. Gallagher said. “And going to your parents — who are they going to tell? How are they going to help? They can’t. Everything was blocked.”

Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Ridge sat across from each other as they recalled their experiences, at times falling silent and fighting tears.

Mr. Gallagher said that the pope’s visit and letter “mean nothing to me.”

“They know what they have to change, but they haven’t changed,” he said, referring to the way the church moved around predatory priests instead of removing them completely from the institution.

“They spread like measles,” he said later, driving past a large white house with three chimneys.

It was Father Greene’s home, where he had been abused.

“Instead of clamping down, they moved them around, and the same thing happened,” Mr. Gallagher said. “They were like virus-”

