

Morning Ireland

**The following correction sent to RTÉ on Tuesday 01/12/2009 at 12:12 following the
*Morning Ireland***

Dear News Editor,

In your news bulletin this morning regarding the interview with Vicar General of the Limerick Diocese Eamonn Fitzgibbon on Morning Ireland, you incorrectly state that that the Murphy Report held that Bishop Murray dealt with “allegations of child abuse badly and in one case inexcusably”. We do not wish to be pedantic on this but there is a slight but critical error in what you state as the criticisms in the report of Bishop Murray do not relate to cases in which he received “allegations”. In fact, he is not criticised anywhere in the report in relation to cases where he received allegations. In the nine cases in the report in which Bishop Murray is referenced, five of them are instances in which Bishop Murray actually received specific allegations and he acted accordingly in all five, as the report finds.

In the report, Bishop Murray is most heavily criticised in relation to the Naughton case, which media have understandably concentrated focus on. However, there was no specific allegation made to Bishop Murray in relation to this case either. Instead he was approached by two lay people together who raised “concern”, as distinct from a specific allegation, in relation to Fr Naughton’s closeness with two altar boys. When asked by Bishop Murray, the lay parishoners said they could not say there was wrongdoing. Bishop Murray proceeded to investigate this matter to the best of his ability but did not manage to discover any evidence of abuse by Fr. Naughton. His enquires included talking to Fr Naughton’s Parish Priest, requesting that he talk to sacristan and teachers in the parish, as well as approaching Fr Naughton himself directly on this matter.

Bishop Murray is on record in expressing his regret that, despite his best efforts, he failed to get to the bottom of the concerns raised and he has sincerely apologised if abuse of children might have been prevented had he acted differently. Unfortunately, Bishop Murray neither had the experience or the expertise at the time to deal with the third party concerns raised with him in relation to Fr. Naughton and this he deeply regrets.

However, it is important from the public’s perspective, and particularly those in his diocese from whom he has sought guidance regarding his future as Bishop, that they are given the clear facts. Below I include Bishop Murray’s homily from last weekend in which he addresses

the tragic and horrific findings of abuse against children in the Murphy Report and responds to calls for his resignation.

Yours in truth,

Fr. Paul Finnerty

Limerick Diocesan Secretary

**First Sunday of Advent
St Joseph's Church
29 November 2009**

The readings of the First Sunday of Advent certainly reflect our situation. The Murphy Report has left us bewildered and shaken. But our first response as Christians must be to open our hearts to the innocent children who suffered such an appalling betrayal of their trust. That abuse blighted the lives of many people. Often their faith was damaged or destroyed by men who were meant to be signs of God's unlimited, healing love.

Our first task as a Christian community is to be a context in which survivors can feel free and encouraged to end their silence and where they can find support in their journey towards serenity and closure.

We must be a community where the safety of children is our paramount concern. The awful accounts that can be found in the Report must urge us to be always vigilant, always seeking to strengthen the safeguarding of children in our parishes, organisations and diocese.

As for me, if there are cases where the abuse of children might have been prevented had I acted differently, I offer to them my sincerest apology. I can honestly say that in the one such case that I can think of, my inability to get to the full truth was not the result of any lack of effort on my part, but a lack of skill and experience. It is no consolation to the children who were abused that I was lacking in experience and I will remain eternally sorry and apologetic to anyone whose suffering I might have prevented.

At no time, however, did I receive an allegation of sexual abuse and fail to take it seriously; at no time did I engage in an attempt to cover up.

I apologise also to you, that, because of me, the anger that this Report rightly provokes has focussed on our diocese, which had no part in the events the Report describes,

I want to assure you that in my time in Limerick every allegation of child sexual abuse has been passed on to the Gardaí and HSE. I meet three to four times a year with these civil authorities to review all our files. We also work very closely with the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church.

There have as you know, been calls for me to resign. As far as I am concerned the question of whether I should resign is a question of whether my presence here is a help or a hindrance to the diocese of Limerick. In that matter I will be guided by the priests and people of the diocese. We have many bodies that represent groups and areas in the diocese -- the Priests' Council, the Parish Pastoral Councils, the Diocesan Pastoral Council,

the Pastoral Areas of the diocese and the Diocesan Child Protection Committee. They guide me and advise me. And they will be guided and advised by you in your parishes and areas.

But I must return to what has to be the main focus of our thoughts. Statistics suggest that every community must have within it people who carry, too often in silence, the burden of childhood abuse, whether by clergy or by others. We must ensure that they are at the centre of our prayers; we must try to ensure that they will feel that we are ready to listen to them, to deepen our understanding of what they have suffered and to respond as best we can.

Although they may feel far from the Church, they may be much closer than they realise to Jesus who prayed on the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Advent is a time to remember God's promise and to know that he is going to fulfil it. It is a time to remember that the Son of Man will come in power and great glory to make all things new. We are meant to be a sign of that hope. We are people who believe that God's mercy and God's healing are without limit. We are meant to be bearers of that hope to one another and especially to people whose trust was betrayed when they were just little children and who endured the terror, helplessness and suffering inflicted by a frightening and dominant adult.

They should always have a special place in our prayers.

+Donal Murray

No acknowledgement or reply had been received from RTÉ when this correction was posted to the website on the 8th of December 2009