

**Article by Paddy Murray,  
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YOU may have read about my brother in recent weeks.

He is, or was, the Bishop of Limerick.

If you were to believe what was written and what was said about him since the publication of the Murphy Report into clerical child abuse in the Dublin diocese, you would say he had no choice but to resign.

He knowingly facilitated paedophiles;

He covered up the activities of priests who abused children;

He moved priests around from parish to parish, knowing them to be abusers;

He received complaints about abuse and didn't act upon them;

He participated in a cover up;

He then refused to resign;

He mounted a 'rearguard action' to save his job;

He fled to Rome where he became 'emboldened' and more determined to hold onto his job;

He went into hiding and;

He went to Rome to organise a 'cushy number' for himself.

If any one of those allegations were true, he should certainly have resigned not now, but a long, long time ago.

Only none of those allegations is true.

Not one.

I know this because, unlike many of those who made the allegations, I have actually read the Murphy report.

Yes, there was criticism of him – and others – in the report.

The criticism is that, in hindsight, he could, or maybe should, have done better in one particular case, a criticism he freely acknowledged in 2002.

For the past three weeks I, and other members of my family, have watched, listened and read as our brother was wrongly accused of appalling behaviour.

Accusations were made by journalists who, in many instances, seem to have simply made up what they said or wrote. In other cases he was attacked by journalists who spat out vitriol and bile at and about my brother, for reasons known only to themselves.

And he was cast aside by members of the clergy who displayed an utter lack of Christianity and a complete disregard for facts, decency, forgiveness, tolerance and compassion.

Some even continued to call on Donal to "do the right thing" when they knew full well, he had already done so and that he was, probably impatiently, waiting for the wheels of Vatican bureaucracy to turn.

All of this was aided and abetted by a commission which watched in complete silence as its report was misinterpreted again and again and again.

This is a commission, which, on the one hand, believed Fr Thomas Naughton to be a liar and, on the other, quoted him "verbatim" in claiming my brother agreed that allegations against the priest were made by "cranks".

Throughout the past few weeks there has been no mention of the enormous good done by my brother in his ministry over the past almost 50-years. There has been little mention of the fact that on no occasion did he fail to act on allegations of the sexual abuse of children.

The very least he did, according to the report, was to refer concerns to the Archdiocese, where the skills and experience needed to deal with the awful cases resided. This was the established procedure at the time.

Certainly, mistakes were made. The diocesan procedures, and perhaps adhering to them were, in retrospect, good examples of such mistakes.

But, if you read the report, you would know that, in the five cases in which my brother was told of specific allegations against a priest, he took the correct action, and is acknowledged to have done so.

In the other cases, concerns were raised, but no allegations of abuse were made. Indeed, he was not actually handling the three cases in which he was the subject criticism.

In the case of Fr Naughton, my brother asked if there was an allegation of abuse and was told there was not.

Nonetheless, he had his "concerns" investigated. And that investigation, by Fr Naughton's Parish Priest, resulted in Donal being told there was no abuse.

When it subsequently emerged that Naughton was, indeed, an abuser, Donal reported the earlier concerns to his superiors.

As long ago as 2002 he acknowledged that he should have reinvestigated those concerns. He didn't. And it is that failure, NOT his handling of the case or any other case, which the Commission deemed to be "inexcusable".

A good man has been vilified. A man whose heart is filled with compassion, who has devoted his life to God and to those less fortunate than himself, who has, by his own admission, occasionally failed, has been scapegoated by those who should and do know better.

The lynch mob has had its day and will now, no doubt, hunt for more victims.

I am not surprised at politicians bandwagoning and joining the witch-hunt. It is what they do in their constant search for the popular cause.

My anger at members of my own profession, for their utter failure to check facts and for publishing stories, which were utterly and patently false, is intense.

My fury at the Commission itself for failing to correct misinterpretations of its report is deep.

My disappointment at senior members of the Catholic clergy for their hand-wringing is palpable.

But more than being angry, I am sad. Desperately sad. Sad to the point of tears.

You may read my words and think: "He would say that, wouldn't he?"

But no. I would not defend the indefensible and nor would any other member of my family.

If my brother was guilty of protecting paedophiles, I would not be writing this.

But I will defend a good man who may not have done precisely the right thing, but certainly did not knowingly do the wrong thing.

If you knew him, you would know that.

He has been damned, convicted without a trial and sentenced without appeal.

I doubt that those in the written and broadcast media who have thrown wild accusations about, will have the grace to apologise. I doubt those who said he was mouning a rearguard action to save his job, who said he was, last weekend, more determined than ever to save that job or those who said he wanted a 'cushy number' will retract their hurtful and scurrilous allegations.

Sadly, those who have defended him have not, in the main, been heard.

So I hope you hear this.

Because, at the end of the day, I AM my brother's keeper.

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