

From: James Shanahan [REDACTED]

To: "fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au" <fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au>

Date: 07/06/2013 01:27 PM

Subject: submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry

To the Parliamentary Inquiry into the response of religious and other organisations to claims of sexual abuse.

Two issues that come up time and again with regard to the church hierarchy's response to victims are the motivation for moving paedophile priests to new parishes and the motivation behind the very low payouts victims receive as 'compensation'. I believe most people misunderstand the church's motivations in these two matters.

In the case of moving a paedophile priest to a new parish because of complaints from the parishioners in the priest's current parish, the accepted reasoning that it is to safeguard the church's good name doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

When a bishop is faced with the situation where a priest has been sexually molesting and/or raping a child, the bishop is already dealing with a situation where the church's good name is in question through the actions of a paedophile priest concerned. In many cases, this is not the first complaint and not the first parish in which he has offended. By ignoring the complaints or by moving the priest in the past, the bishop has allowed the good name of the church to be tarnished.

To move the priest yet again is to knowingly put the good name of the church at further risk. This is not the response of someone who values the reputation of the church. In the short term, it does minimise the damage as compared to handing the paedophile over to the police. But there are other options open to the bishop if he was interested in saving the face of the church which would both protect the children in the future (though, granted, this has never been a priority for the church officials) and the 'good name of the church' in the present and, most importantly, in the future, too. A bishop committed to preserving the good name of the church into the future would ensure the priest was put in a position whereby he would not have access to children. So to move the priest is not protecting the good name of the church.

Bishop's routinely ignored other options and instead provided the paedophiles what they wanted; greener fields and carte blanche to offend again knowing that the church hierarchy would act to protect them yet again if there were more complaints. The church hierarchy was in complete sympathy with the paedophiles. What sort of persons, through their actions, show they are in complete sympathy with paedophiles? The only people I can think of are fellow paedophiles.

The reasoning behind the low payouts to victims of sexual abuse is much more than saving money. Taking into account the immense size of the annual revenue of the Catholic Church, if the payouts were tripled, it would not make a dent in their annual accounts.

The low payouts are an integral part of the strategy behind Pell's "Melbourne Response". The strategy was to minimise the damage to the church as a whole and to protect the priests and bishops involved by silencing the victims by re-abusing them. The strategy was to take the allegations out of the public arena and out of the hands of the legal system. It was meant to silence victims (as far as the police and the public were concerned) in the immediate instance and in the future by re-abusing them. The low payouts are part of this re-abuse. They are meant to be demeaning and they are very effective at that. I can attest to this from my own personal experience.

In 2000, Peter O'Callaghan, the church's investigator, accepted my claim that I had been abused by a satanic cult which included at least one priest, Fr Thomas O'Keefe (since then I have been able to identify a second priest in this cult, Fr Kevin O'Donnell). I had not wanted to go through the 'church process' as I knew they would only pay me a part of the maximum of \$50,000 and I couldn't bear the insult. The church had been pursuing me to engage in this process as I had been speaking publicly but I resisted for some years. Then my workshop mysteriously burnt down and with went my income. I was then in danger of losing my house and becoming bankrupt so I contacted O'Callaghan.

As I foresaw, the so-called Compensation Panel awarded me \$33,000 out of a possible, by then, \$55,000. Due to my financial position, I was obliged to accept it. It was a massive blow and affected me deeply and for some years after, as I believe the church intended. I have not spoken about these issues publicly since then.

The church is well used to manipulating people with money. It is not the dollar amounts that are important to them but the power over people that it facilitates.

By their own documents, what the Compensation Panel offered me was \$33,000 in return for not suing the church. It was not in recompense for any abuse or damage done by O'Keefe.

The overall effect of the church process known as "The Melbourne Response" is to leave the victim with a pervasive sense of powerlessness. There is no where else to turn for help or justice except to the church which is very clearly on the side of the perpetrators. The state and the law has left us to the predations of the church.

I would ask that the Inquiry recommend to Parliament-

- that it legislates that any legal impediments to victims suing the Catholic Church be removed;
- that the conditions attached to the money given by the church to victims be made null and void;
- that the amounts awarded to victims be automatically tripled and provide a govt panel to review claims over that amount by victims;
- that legal fees incurred by victims be refunded;
- that all this to be paid for by the Catholic Church;
- that the Catholic Church be barred from investigations that involved the participation of any victims of abuse.

Details of my case were published in the major city papers of the Murdoch press in 2006 and may viewed online at News.com

http://blogs.theaustralian.news.com.au/garyhughes/index.php/theaustralian/comments/extraordinary_claims_true_catholic_church/

I am happy to furnish the Parliamentary Inquiry with details and documents should any members wish to pursue this further.

Yours faithfully,

James Shanahan.

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http://blogs.theaustralian.news.com.au/garyhughes/index.php/theaustralian/comments/extraordinary_claims_true_catholic_church/

THE AUSTRALIAN

Gotcha with Gary Hughes Blog |

26 May 2006 |

60 Comments

Gary Hughes is a senior writer in the Melbourne office of The Australian, specialising in reporting on crime and corruption. He has won three Walkley Awards for his investigative reporting.

image

The most extraordinary thing about today's allegations of murders during satanic rituals involving a Melbourne priest is not that they've been made, but that the Catholic Church admitted in writing that it accepted they were substantially true.

Indeed "extraordinary" was the word used by the Melbourne Archdiocese's experienced sexual abuse investigator Peter O'Callaghan QC to describe the allegations when they were put to him in 2000.

Documents on the case obtained by Gotcha show that Mr O'Callaghan, who has overseen claims for compensation by more than 200 victims of sexual abuse by Melbourne Catholic priests, accepted that the man making the allegations was telling the truth. (You can read today's news story on the revelations here).

"I see no reason why I shouldn't accept what you say," Mr Callaghan told the victim during a formal interview on October 9, 2000. "Amazing as it is, I accept it."

And two days later in a letter to the victim's lawyer offering compensation, Mr O'Callaghan said: "I confirm that the events which (the victim) describes are extraordinary, but I have no reason or justification for doubting his credibility."

Mr O'Callaghan also acknowledged that what the victim told the Archdiocese was similar to what he had told his psychiatrist and that the psychiatrist "accepts what (he) has described was the fact".

The statement provided to the Archdiocese by the victim, who wants to remain anonymous, makes chilling reading.

He details how the Catholic priest, who has since died, first began abusing him at the age of 11 in 1961 when he was serving as an altar boy at the Sacred Heart Church in the bayside suburb of Sandringham and attending a Catholic school, where the priest was chaplain. The priest got the victim alone in a room on the pretext of giving him a sex education lesson and sexually abused him.

Later the priest would sexually abuse the boy in his car and at the Sacred Heart Church's presbytery, where the victim was lured on the promise of playing with toy soldiers.

But it's the accounts of satanic rituals and the victim's eyewitness reports of murders that are harrowing.

In the statement he details at least three murders – a young girl, a youth and a young child. He says the victims were mostly drugged and appeared to be in a daze before having their throats cut or being hacked with an axe.

He says he was forced to take part in the rituals and was sexually abused during them by the priest and others involved in the ceremonies.

While claims of satanic rituals and ritualised sexual abuse by victims are nothing new, what makes these allegations different is the Melbourne Archdiocese's acceptance of the claims as being true. To our knowledge, it is the first time the Catholic Church in Melbourne has done that in writing.

Some of the rituals, which occurred over a three year period, took place in an old house owned by the Catholic Church in Sandringham. The house was later demolished and a new Sacred Heart Church built on the site.

"It would have been impossible to sprinkle enough Holy Water on that site to purify it before building a new church on it," the victim told Gotcha.

Other rituals took place at other locations around Melbourne. The victim would be driven to and from the locations by the priest.

The victim said during one of the final sexual assaults by the priest he was threatened with a carving and told he would be killed if he ever talked to anyone about what he had seen or what had been done to him.

The victim first contacted Victoria Police in 1998 and was told details would be passed to the homicide squad. He says he heard nothing more.

In his interview with the victim, Mr O'Callaghan confirmed that details contained in the statement "is a series of criminal offences, but it doesn't appear that anyone has ever been apprehended for those offences, or will be".

Mr O'Callaghan independently contacted Victoria Police in 1999 over the allegations, but was told that homicide and missing persons records had been checked and there was no ongoing investigation.

The victim finally escaped the priest's clutches at the age of 14, when he was old enough to start avoiding him.

In accepting the compensation payout, the victim had to agree not to take further legal action against the Archdiocese.

In a letter to the victim dated January 5, 2001, the then head of the Melbourne Archdiocese, Cardinal George Pell, apologised for the "wrong and hurt" he suffered at the hands of the priest.

The victim's decision to speak out follows the conviction in the United States earlier this month of Catholic priest Gerald Robinson for the ritualistic murder of a nun.

He said he believed there were other victims of ritualised abuse in Australia who were too afraid or embarrassed to speak out.

Robinson was charged with the murder of the nun 26 years ago after a female victim of child sexual abuse went to authorities with claims that the priest had been involved in satanic rituals.

Here are extracts from the documents on the Melbourne case:

Extract from letter to victims lawyers, October 11, 2000:

"I refer to our conference with Mr (name of victim) and yourself on 9 October 2000 and confirm that I am satisfied that Mr (victim) was a victim of sexual abuse...substantially in the circumstances described by mr (victim) in the statement he made to you in November 1999, and which statement he verified at the conference today.

I confirm that the events which Mr (victim) describes are extraordinary, but I have no reason of justification for doubting his credibility. In that context I note that an experienced psychiatrist...has accepted what Mr (victim) has described was the fact.

I accordingly enclose herewith an application for compensation which I invite you to have your client complete and return to me.

Yours sincerely

Peter O'Callaghan

Independent Commissioner

Extract from transcript of conference between the victim, his lawyer and Independent Commissioner Peter O'Callaghan, October 9, 2000:

O'Callaghan: ...I have read a statement that you made...could you just look at that please. I don't want you necessarily to read through it, but do you remember making that statement?

Victim: Yes, this was written up from material and it's correct.

O'Callaghan: Yes, so the contents of that statement are true and correct.

Victim: Yes.

O'Callaghan: Alright, well now look the...I appreciate what (victim's lawyer) was saying that the matters are harrowing in your recollection, but what you've told Dr (name of psychiatrist), is that also true and correct?

Victim: Yes.

O'Callaghan: And the thing I've got to frankly say is yours is an amazing story. But you tell me it's true.

Victim: Mmm.

O'Callaghan: You saw Detective (inaudible) at one stage, didn't you?

Victim: I spoke to him twice on the telephone.

O'Callaghan: Yes. And he, when was the last time you spoke to him?

Victim: When?

O'Callaghan: Yes. Approximately.

Victim: Maybe two or three years ago, I imagine.

O'Callaghan: Right, alright well, what you relate is a series of criminal offences, but it doesn't appear that anyone has been apprehended for those offences, or will be.

Victim: Mmm.

O'Callaghan: Alright, well look the position is that I am an Independent Commissioner and if I am satisfied that a person has been the victim of sexual abuse by a priest of the Archdiocese, then I can refer that person to Care Link, which you know about. I can also refer that person to the compensation panel and make an application for compensation, which I take it that you're desirous of doing, are you?

Victim: Yes.

O'Callaghan: Well, what that entitles you to is an award of compensation up to a limit of \$50,000. What I will do is to indicate that I am satisfied that you were the victim of sexual abuse. I see no reason why I shouldn't accept what you say and it's certainly supported by what you told Dr (name of psychiatrist) and indeed what you've told a number of people over many years. Amazing as it is, I accept it. And if on that basis, what I will do is I'll send out...an application for compensation and you can fill that in..."

Melbourne Archdiocese response to NEWS.com.au:

"The Independent Commissioner advises that after he was contacted by (the victim's solicitor) in 1999, he advised (the solicitor) as follows:

'Could you advise me whether these matters have been reported to the police and if so what action emanated therefrom. If they have not been reported to the police, then it would seem essential that they are...

'I accept that you have forwarded this letter to me in my role as Independent Commissioner and on the premise (at least implied) that I will treat this matter in confidence. I confirm that this is certainly the position at this point in time, but I would certainly be urging your client to report the matter to the police...or alternatively I would ask his permission to myself report the matter to police.'

(The victim's solicitor) subsequently advised that the matter had been reported to the police and authorised the Commissioner to contact the police.

The Independent Commissioner then contacted the police, who advised (the victim) had in 1998 advised the police that he was the victim of sexual assault and was a witness to murder. The police advised that enquiries had been made with the homicide squad and their missing persons records

and intelligence was unable to confirm the allegations, and that there was no current investigation into the matter.

Accordingly the Independent Commissioner proceeded to deal with (the victim's) application for compensation."

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From: James Shanahan [REDACTED]

To: "fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au" <fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au>

Date: 07/06/2013 01:57 PM

Subject: Addendum to submission to Parliamentary Inquiry

To the Parliamentary Inquiry into the response of religious and other organisations to claims of sexual abuse-

ADDENDUM to previous statement

The parish of Doveton had an unbroken line of six paedophile priests starting with Thomas O'Keefe (one of my abusers) and ending with Peter Searson. Victims were passed from one abuser to the next. All six, I believe, were violently abusive. The odds of this succession of appointments coming about by chance are extreme.

Using the ratio of one paedophile in four, the odds are 4096 to 1. Using the ratio of 10:1 we have a 1,000,000 to 1 chance. Clearly the personnel of the Pastoral Placement Office and/or Vicars General and/or the Archbishops of Melbourne for this period were complicit in criminal activity.

I believe it would be valuable for the committee to obtain all church records concerning these appointments.

Yours faithfully,

James Shanahan

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