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Three more Irish bishops resign

Cian Molloy Catholic News Service | Dec. 28, 2009

DUBLIN, Ireland -- Three more Irish bishops have announced their resignations, bringing the total to four who have resigned as a result of a recent report on how the Dublin Archdiocese covered up clerical sex abuse allegations and put children at risk of further abuse.

On Christmas Eve Dublin Auxiliary Bishops Eamonn Walsh and Raymond Field announced they were offering their resignations to Pope Benedict XVI.

"As we celebrate the feast of Christmas, the birth of our savior, the prince of peace, it is our hope that our action may help to bring the peace and reconciliation of Jesus Christ to the victims/survivors of child sexual abuse," the bishops said in a joint statement. "We again apologize to them. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have so bravely spoken out and those who continue to suffer in silence. We will not be saying anything further at this time."

The previous day, Dec. 23, Bishop James Moriarty of Kildare and Leighlin announced his resignation, saying that he should have challenged the prevailing culture in Dublin's archdiocesan administration.

The independent inquiry into the archdiocesan actions, known as the Murphy Report, was published in November. At that time, the three bishops said the report did not find them individually at fault in failing to report child abuse and that the most serious charge against any of them was a failure to consult diocesan records when complaints of abuse were made against priests.

In his Dec 23 resignation statement, Bishop Moriarty said: "I fully accept the overall conclusion of the commission -- that the attempts by church authorities to 'protect the church' and to 'avoid scandal' had the most dreadful consequences for children and were deeply wrong.

"It does not serve the truth to overstate my responsibility and authority within the archdiocese. Nor does it serve the truth to overlook the fact that the system of management and communications was seriously flawed," he said. "However, with the benefit of hindsight, I accept that, from the time I became an auxiliary bishop, I should have challenged the prevailing culture."

Bishop Donal Murray of Limerick announced his resignation Dec. 17.

The only other serving bishop named in the report, Bishop Martin Drennan of Galway, said he does not believe the report finds him at fault and does not believe he should resign.

In 2002, Bishop Brendan Comiskey resigned as head of the Ferns Diocese after a television documentary showed that he had covered up child abuse allegations there. Bishop Comiskey served as an auxiliary in Dublin from 1980 to 1984; Bishop Walsh administered the Ferns Diocese for several years until a successor was appointed.

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