NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Pope accepts resignation of Irish bishop

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Apr. 22, 2010

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI accepted the resignation of Bishop James Moriarty of Kildare and Leighlin, Ireland, who said he should have challenged the culture of silence in the Irish church when priests were accused of sexually abusing minors.

The Vatican announced April 22 that the pope accepted the resignation of the 73-year-old bishop under a provision in canon law for retiring before age 75 "because of ill health or some other grave cause."

In a statement April 22, Bishop Moriarty again apologized to victims of clerical sex abuse and said it was blatantly un-Christian of bishops to argue about their degree of responsibility for the scandal when the victims were in such pain.

Bishop Moriarty announced Dec. 23 that he had offered to resign, saying at the time, "I fully accept the overall conclusion" of an independent 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."

In his April 22 statement, the bishop said the decision to resign was "the most difficult decision of my ministry."

He said that while he was not directly criticized in a report of an independent commission investigating how the church handled abuse allegations, as an auxiliary bishop in Dublin from 1991 to 2002 "I should have challenged the prevailing culture."

Bishop Moriarty said he hoped his resignation would honor "the truth that the survivors have so bravely uncovered" and that it would open the way "to a better future for all concerned."

"The truth is that the long struggle of survivors to be heard and respected by church authorities has revealed a culture within the church that many would simply describe as un-Christian," he said. "People do not recognize the gentle, endless love of the Lord in narrow interpretations of responsibility and a basic lack of compassion and humility. This has been profoundly dispiriting for all who care about the church."

"I believe the spiritual well-being" of the church demands that the "principle of the church as always in need of reform, which was embraced at the Second Vatican Council, should again come to the forefront of church life," especially in transcending "the kind of clerical culture that led us here," the bishop added.

Bishop Moriarty was the first of three Irish bishops to offer to resign after the publication in November of a report from an independent inquiry into how abuse allegations were handled in the Archdiocese of Dublin from 1975 to 2004. The bishops said the document, known as the Murphy 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.

The others who said they offered to resign -- Dublin Auxiliary Bishops Eamon Walsh and Raymond Field -- are

still serving.

Bishop Donal Murray of Limerick, whose failure to handle abuse properly was described by the Commission as "inexcusable," resigned in December. Bishop John Magee of Cloyne resigned in March after an independent audit found that there were inadequate child protection policies in his diocese. The Diocese of Cloyne is now subject to a judicial inquiry which is expected to report later this year.

Source URL (retrieved on *03/11/2014 - 09:55*): http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/pope-accepts-resignation-irish-bishop