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Dublin abuse stats: Most allegations against priests were from 1980s

Michael Kelly Catholic News Service | May. 24, 2012

DUBLIN -- A new analysis of allegations of abuse made against 98 priests over a 70-year period shows that the alleged abuse peaked in the 1980s.

Fresh data released by the Dublin Archdiocese on Thursday showed that 34 percent of complainants alleged their abuse happened in the 1980s. Just 1 percent of claims relate to alleged abuse in the period from 2000 to 2010.

The update also shows that the cost, so far, to the archdiocese for settlement of claims regarding child sexual abuse by priests is currently stands at $19 million, approximately $13 million of which is compensation and the remainder legal costs paid for both sides.

The latest data is the first time that the archdiocese has provided a detailed breakdown on when reported abuse is alleged to have taken place. It shows that of the 98 priests accused of abuse, approximately 2 percent of these priests are alleged to have abuse in the 1940s, 4 percent in the 1950s, 23 percent in the 1960s, 27 percent in the 1970s, 34 percent in the 1980s, 9 percent in the 1990s and 1 percent in the 2000s.

The head of the archdiocesan Child Safeguarding and Protection Service, Andrew Fagan, said the publication of the statistics "is vital in keeping the public informed and reassured of the ongoing efforts to maintain high standards in child safeguarding."

He said that "while the majority of allegations of abuse reported to us now relate to sexual abuse which may have occurred many years ago, it is still crucial to be vigilant and to work to ensure standards are maintained."

"In Dublin, child safeguarding operates to a high standard, and Dublin parishes are now safer places for children," he said.

Since last year's publication of statistics, allegations of abuse were reported against four priests who were not previously the subject of complaints. Of 1,350 priests who have served in Dublin over the past 70 years, 98 have had abuse allegations made against them.

Nearly 200 civil actions have been filed against 46 priests of the archdiocese; 135 have been concluded and the remainder are ongoing.

In 2009, a judicial inquiry reported that abuse in the Dublin Archdiocese had been routinely mishandled. It found that the avoidance of scandal and the preservation of the reputation of the church and accused priests were frequently put ahead of the needs of those alleging abuse.

Four Irish bishops have resigned in recent years after being accused of failing to deal adequately with abuse allegations.

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