

Introduction

13.1 Marie Collins, one of the many people abused by Fr Edmondus, and who was severely affected by the abuse, stated in the documents submitted by her to the Commission:

*“Father [Edmondus] betrayed the trust invested in him by his religious superiors. He betrayed the trust of the hospital authorities. He betrayed my parents’ trust. All had given me into his care. He betrayed my trust and my innocence. He abused his power and used my respect for his religious position to abuse and degrade me - a child - not just a child but a sick child. How much lower than that can you sink? **A man like that deserves our prayers but not our protection**”.* (Emphasis in original)

13.2 The Fr Edmondus case is being dealt with by the Commission because it involves a priest who committed a number of sexual assaults on young patients aged between eight and 11 years in Our Lady’s Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Sixteen years later, when he was based in Co Wicklow, he committed a sexual assault on a nine-year-old child.

13.3 The case also falls to be considered by the Commission because, in the 1990s, suspicions about his behaviour while he was a curate in a North Dublin parish were brought to the attention of the Archdiocese.

13.4 Fr Edmondus was born in 1931 and ordained in 1957. He was chaplain to Our Lady’s Hospital for Sick Children from 1958 to 1960. He subsequently held a number of appointments in the Archdiocese. His faculties were withdrawn in 1997. In that same year, he was convicted of indecent assault against two girls and served a term of nine months imprisonment. He remains a priest but is prohibited from exercising ministry and is not allowed to wear clerical garb. He currently lives in Dublin.

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This is a pseudonym.

Complaint, 1960

13.5 In August 1960, Archbishop McQuaid was informed that a security officer at a photographic film company in the UK had referred colour film, sent to them for developing by Fr Edmondus, to Scotland Yard. Scotland Yard referred the matter to the Commissioner of the Gardaí. There is no evidence of any Garda investigation. However Garda Commissioner Costigan met Archbishop McQuaid and, according to Archbishop McQuaid's note of the meeting, told him that the photographic company had "*handed to Scotland Yard a colour film with label Rev. [Edmondus], Childrens Hospital, Crumlin, Dublin, of which 26 transparencies were of the private parts of two small girls, aged 10 or 11 years*". The Garda Commissioner asked Archbishop McQuaid to take over the case because a priest was in question and the Gardaí "*could prove nothing*". The Commissioner told Archbishop McQuaid that he would do nothing further. No attempt seems to have been made to establish who the two girls in the photographs were. The Commission would like to point out that neither the Dublin Archdiocese nor the Gardaí made discovery of the colour film so the Commission is not in a position to say what happened to it.

13.6 Archbishop McQuaid immediately referred the case to his auxiliary bishop, Bishop Dunne. It is clear that the Archbishop was using the procedures outlined in the 1922 instruction (see Chapter 4). Bishop Dunne expressed the view that a *crimen pessimum* (the worst crime, which includes child sexual abuse) had been committed.

13.7 The next day, Archbishop McQuaid met Fr Edmondus who admitted photographing the children in sexual postures alone and in groups. These photographs were taken in Crumlin hospital. The Archbishop recorded as follows:

"The children were playing about, lifting their clothes. He rebuked them. Seeing this was a chance of discovering what the genitals were like, he pretended there was no film in the camera he was carrying and photographed them in sexual postures, alone and seated together, chiefly in a way or posture that opened up the parts. He declared that he had done so, as one would take an art photo., seeing no grave sin at all and suffering no physical disturbance in himself. He was puzzled, though he had seen line drawings, as to structure and functions of female. In questioning, I discovered that he had been

reared with brothers,⁵⁵ had never moved about socially with girls and tended to avoid them as in the hospital with the nurses. I suggested I would get [a doctor] a good Catholic to instruct him and thus end his wonderment.”

Archbishop McQuaid also recorded: “*I felt that he clearly understood the nature of the sinful act involved and to send him on retreat would defame him”.*

13.8 Archbishop McQuaid and Bishop Dunne then agreed that there was not an objective and subjective crime of the type envisaged in the 1922 instruction and consequently that there was no need to refer the matter to the Holy Office in Rome.

13.9 Later, Fr Edmondus saw the doctor on three occasions. There is no report from the doctor on the Church files.

13.10 While Archbishop McQuaid investigated the matter promptly, he limited his activity to dealing with the priest’s problem. He does not seem to have made any effort to establish who the children involved were, nor did he contact Crumlin hospital nor did he put in place any protocols for future chaplains to the children in that hospital. In view of the fact that he was chairman of the board of directors of the hospital, this was a particular omission. At this stage, Fr Edmondus was no longer the chaplain to the hospital. This failure to contact the hospital or put any protocol in place meant that, when Fr Ivan Payne (see Chapter 24) became chaplain to the same hospital, the hospital had no knowledge of previous wrongdoing by a chaplain. Archbishop Martin, on behalf of the Archdiocese, has suggested to the Commission that what Archbishop McQuaid was trying to establish was whether the subjective and objective elements of a canonical crime had been committed and that he found that no crime had been committed.

13.11 Given that these photographs were taken by deception, when a nurse was absent, given the nature of the photographs and the fact that the film was sent to the UK for development, any reasonable person would imply *mens rea*

⁵⁵ In fact, Fr Edmondus had a sister so either he was clearly not telling the whole truth to the Archbishop or the Archbishop chose to ignore it.

or criminal intent from the circumstances. The conclusion of the Archbishop and Bishop Dunne that this was not an objective and subjective crime within the meaning of canon law is, in the Commission's view, unreasonable and contrary to common sense now and in 1960. It is totally at variance with Bishop Dunne's original opinion as recorded by Archbishop McQuaid a few days earlier. The Commission believes that Archbishop McQuaid acted as he did to avoid scandal in both Ireland and Rome and without regard to the protection of children in Crumlin hospital. Archbishop Martin accepts that the conclusion reached by Archbishop McQuaid and Bishop Dunne was wrong and that the measures taken were inadequate but he does not agree with the Commission's conclusion that Archbishop McQuaid acted the way he did to avoid scandal both here and in Rome.

Reporting of abuse, 1985

13.12 Marie Collins, who was one of a number of young people sexually abused by Fr Edmondus at Crumlin hospital, approached her local curate, Fr Eddie Griffin, in November 1985 and told him about her abuse. She had been sexually abused and photographed by Fr Edmondus in Crumlin hospital in 1960 when she was aged 13. The curate indicated to her that he did not want to know the name of her abuser as he would have to do something about it. According to a statement which he gave to the Gardaí in 2004, he said that he explained to Mrs Collins that *"I didn't want to know the name of the priest. If she told me the name of the priest I had to do something about it"*. He went on to say in his Garda statement:

"We as priests had been advised while in college not to seek the name of priests that allegations were being made against. Marie Collins didn't tell me that name of the priest. I told her not to feel any guilt about what had happened and that the priest had done wrong and if she had guilt I could give her absolution."

Despite having told Mrs Collins he did not wish to know the name of the priest, he went on to say in his garda statement *"when she didn't tell me his name I wondered why she was there and thought she might be feeling guilty and I told her I could do away with her guilt by giving her absolution"*.

13.13 Although Fr Griffin contends that he was approaching the matter in a 'pastoral' manner which would not require him to seek the identity of the priest, the fact is that a criminal offence was disclosed to him and his

response was, in the Commission's view, inadequate. It was to be another ten years before Mrs Collins plucked up the courage to report the matter to Archbishop's House.

Suspicious, 1993

13.14 In 1993, while Fr Edmondus was a curate in Edenmore in north Dublin, a complaint was made by a parishioner regarding his contact with young children. This complaint, which appears to have come initially from youth workers, was made to a local priest who reported it to Bishop James Moriarty, who was the auxiliary bishop for that area. Bishop Moriarty summarised the reported inappropriate behaviour of Fr Edmondus as follows:

- young girls driving around in his car and allegations that the girls had sometimes changed in his house before going swimming;
- giving young children money;
- group of youngsters who were very poor attenders at school spending time with him;
- no adults allowed into his house; the only people allowed in were the very old or young.

13.15 Bishop Moriarty discussed the problem with the local priests and with Archbishop Connell. He then warned Fr Edmondus about his behaviour and advised him to desist from the activities mentioned. After this, the parish priest noted a change in his behaviour but others felt he still surrounded himself with children quite a bit. No attempt was made by the archdiocesan authorities to check the archives or other files relating to Fr Edmondus when these complaints were received. Bishop Moriarty pointed out to the Commission that he did not have access to the archives but he could have asked the Archbishop to conduct such a search. Information was also received about Fr Edmondus recording the children's voices and he himself admitted to photographing them.

Letters of complaint from Marie Collins, 1995

13.16 In October 1995, Marie Collins wrote to Archbishop Connell regarding her abuse by Fr Edmondus. She also told him of her attempts to tell her local curate about the abuse. Around the same time she wrote a letter of complaint

to Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin and offered to talk to a secretary/manager about the abuse.

13.17 A few days after her complaint to Archbishop Connell, he initiated a preliminary investigation under canon 1717 and appointed Monsignor Alex Stenson as the delegate. By this time, October 1995, the Church authorities were familiar with many aspects of clerical child abuse. Not only was work on the *Framework Document* (see Chapter 7) well advanced but several Church personnel had travelled to dioceses in the USA to learn from their experiences. In addition there had been the fall out of the Fr Brendan Smyth case (see Chapter 7) and the Archdiocese itself had received a significant number of complaints of child sexual abuse by priests of the Archdiocese.

13.18 In October 1995, following receipt of Mrs Collins's complaint, a trawl was done in the secret archives and the 1960 complaint became known to Archbishop Connell and Monsignor Stenson. Monsignor Stenson, though chancellor of the Archdiocese since 1981, only became aware of the 1993 Edenmore concerns in the course of his investigation. Cardinal Connell told the Commission that he referred all complaints of sexual abuse to the chancellor. He did not feel it necessary to refer the concerns about inappropriate behaviour on the part of Fr Edmondus to Monsignor Stenson.

Evidence of Mrs Collins and Fr Norman

13.19 Both Mrs Collins and her support priest, Fr James Norman, gave extensive evidence to the Commission. Her evidence related not only to her complaint against Fr Edmondus but also covered steps taken by her and others to get support services for victims of clerical sex abuse.

13.20 Her evidence was very helpful to the Commission in understanding how the *Framework Document* was being implemented. It was also helpful in attempting to assess the attitude of Church officials to cases in which they accepted that abuse had taken place.

13.21 Mrs Collins was extremely unhappy with the way her complaint was dealt with by the Church authorities. In addition to writing to Archbishop Connell in October 1995, she had also written to Bishop Forristal (the chair of the committee drafting the *Framework Document*), Crumlin hospital and the

local priest to whom she had earlier complained, to let them know that she was making a complaint to the Archdiocese. Bishop Forristal replied personally and sympathetically. The hospital authorities responded immediately and arranged to meet her. She found them very sympathetic. They offered counselling and told her that they would be reporting the matter to the Gardaí, which they did.

13.22 Archbishop Connell passed the letter from Mrs Collins to Monsignor Stenson and did not reply directly himself. The local priest did not reply at all. Monsignor Stenson replied, apologised on behalf of Archbishop Connell and made arrangements to meet Mrs Collins.

Monsignor Stenson's meeting with Mrs Collins

13.23 Monsignor Stenson met Mrs Collins in October 1995. He indicated that he would have to notify the Gardaí in relation to her complaints. He noted in the memorandum of their meeting that she had met a representative from Crumlin hospital who had also indicated that the Gardaí would be notified.

13.24 Mrs Collins felt that Monsignor Stenson had listened very sympathetically to her and indeed acknowledged this in a letter to him subsequently. It is very clear that Monsignor Stenson believed Mrs Collins. However, he did not tell her that there were other incidents and concerns in respect of Fr Edmondus's time at Crumlin hospital and she was very annoyed about this when she subsequently discovered it. Cardinal Connell has told the Commission that there was no legal obligation on him or the Archdiocese to inform Mrs Collins of other incidents or concerns. While this is true, the Commission believes that Mrs Collins was justified in her annoyance at not being told of the 1960 incidents at her first meeting with Monsignor Stenson. The Commission is aware that Monsignor Stenson told the Gardaí of the 1960 incidents in November 1995 but waited until March 1996 to tell Mrs Collins. Monsignor Stenson has told the Commission that he did not regard himself as free to tell Mrs Collins about the Crumlin incidents. He was constrained by the oath of secrecy which he took when he became chancellor and he could not reveal that information without the consent of Archbishop Connell. He said he made the November 1995 statement to the Gardaí with the permission of Archbishop Connell. He said the same oath of secrecy

prevented him from making a further statement to the Gardaí about his preliminary investigation of the Fr Edmondus case.

13.25 As was his practice, Monsignor Stenson made a comprehensive note of the meeting. The note revealed Mrs Collins to have been severely psychologically damaged by the abuse. Except for her revelation to her local curate in 1985, which unfortunately succeeded only in exacerbating the trauma she suffered, it had taken her almost 35 years to summon up the courage to approach the Church authorities and discuss in detail her abuse by Fr Edmondus. She also expressed worry that other children might have been abused by him and wanted reassurance that he was not left in a position to abuse children.

Monsignor Stenson's meeting with Fr Edmondus

13.26 Shortly after meeting Mrs Collins, Monsignor Stenson met Fr Edmondus. Monsignor Stenson told him that the Gardaí had been in contact and wanted to meet him in relation to the complaint of Mrs Collins. Monsignor Stenson outlined the complaint and Fr Edmondus replied "*I cannot place the girl*" but he accepted that inappropriate touching could have happened. He was clear that it was a separate allegation from the matters that had been reported to Archbishop McQuaid in 1960. He accepted that a Christmas card which Mrs Collins claimed he had sent her bore his signature. Mrs Collins had given the Christmas card to Monsignor Stenson. Fr Edmondus said that he had no problem with little boys but, "*if he had a problem, it was with little girls*". He told Monsignor Stenson that the meeting with Archbishop McQuaid had scared him and had made him very careful.

13.27 Fr Edmondus said that he would have no problem making an apology to Mrs Collins and claimed that nothing of this nature had ever happened in any of his subsequent appointments.

13.28 In November 1995, Monsignor Stenson provided the Gardaí with an address for Fr Edmondus and gave them some information about the 1960 complaint.

Medical assessment

13.29 Fr Edmondus was referred for an assessment to the Granada Institute. A December 1995 report from Granada recommended that he “*be removed from ministry as it is presently constituted*” even though Fr Edmondus had said that he had very little exposure to children. This assessment was based on “*the escalatory nature of the alleged abuse... the alleged abusive pattern started with what appeared to be good natured innocent fun but was then followed by more sinister demands on the child*”.

Garda investigation

13.30 In January 1996 a garda report on the complaint by Mrs Collins concluded: “*Unfortunately while I would be of the opinion that the events as described by Marie did happen, there is very little evidence available to us to corroborate her allegations apart from Monsignor Stenson’s statement about the slides. It would be for this reason as well as the considerable time delay in this case that I feel a prosecution against Fr [Edmondus] would be fruitless*”.

13.31 This view was shared by the investigating garda, the sergeant, the detective inspector and the detective superintendent. The file was forwarded to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

Further meeting with Monsignor Stenson, 1996

13.32 In March 1996, Mrs Collins met Monsignor Stenson again. Mrs Collins was anxious to know whether or not Fr Edmondus had admitted to the allegation which she had made. Monsignor Stenson confirmed that he had. In fact, what Fr Edmondus had said could not be regarded as a clear admission. Monsignor Stenson informed Mrs Collins that Fr Edmondus was not in a parish, was living in a religious house and was receiving therapy. Monsignor Stenson also noted in his record of their meeting that he was “*satisfied that she is not out to make difficulties for Fr [Edmondus] or indeed for the Church*”.

13.33 Mrs Collins said that at this meeting, Monsignor Stenson indicated that following treatment Fr Edmondus might be returned to a parish. In a subsequent letter, she told Monsignor Stenson that this should not happen. She was also extremely concerned that Monsignor Stenson had not told her

earlier that Fr Edmondus had admitted her abuse. She said she should not have been left waiting for five months to find out.

13.34 Fr Edmondus was in fact, contrary to assurances given to Mrs Collins, still a curate in Edenmore and was not immediately removed from ministry. Cardinal Connell told the Commission that

“In the case of [Edmondus] I did not remove him from his parish immediately. I told him he was not to live there and he wasn’t to minister there. In that sense I took him out of his parish. I left him officially in his position. This gave rise to a lot of trouble from one of the victims there. But the reason I did that of course was because there had been nothing against [Edmondus] for something like 30 years, and it seemed to me a bit too harsh. I did, in the interest of children, I did instruct him not to live there and he was not to minister there”.

The ‘trouble from one of the victims’ to which the Cardinal referred relates to Mrs Collins’s campaign to have Fr Edmondus removed from ministry. It should also be noted that it is not correct to say that there had been nothing against Fr Edmondus for 30 years; there had been the concerns expressed in 1993.

13.35 Despite the Archbishop’s instructions, Fr Edmondus continued to visit the parish frequently and dressed in clerical attire for a number of months. His name remained on the confessional box for a number of months. Cardinal Connell told the Commission that he admonished Fr Edmondus for attending at the parish and not obeying his instructions. The Commission could find no evidence of any monitoring of his activities. His faculties were not formally withdrawn by Archbishop Connell until January 1997. His name remained in the *Dublin Diocesan Guidebook*⁵⁶ and he was described as a curate in Edenmore throughout 1996 and 1997.

A new complaint, 1996

13.36 In March 1996, a notification was sent from the Eastern Health Board to the local garda superintendent regarding the alleged sexual abuse by Fr

⁵⁶ This is published annually by the Archdiocese and includes, among other things, the names of the priests serving in the various parishes and other services of the Archdiocese.

Edmondus of a woman in a Co Wicklow parish when she was a nine year old child. This complainant did not complain to the Archdiocese at this time.

13.37 The Gardaí carried out a thorough investigation of her complaints. They took statements from people whom the woman claimed she had told about the abuse many years previously. Fr Edmondus was interviewed about the allegations and he gave the standard reply that, on the advice of his solicitor, he had nothing to say.

13.38 The Gardaí then looked afresh at the Marie Collins case. She had contacted them further about her case. They felt a number of matters would have to be further investigated:

- the question of identification of Fr Edmondus as the person who allegedly assaulted Marie Collins in 1960;
- the question of establishing what was contained in the record of the 1960 complaint;
- re-interviewing Marie Collins regarding the reference in her statement to slides having been processed in the UK;
- putting the claim to Monsignor Stenson that Fr Edmondus admitted the offence to him.

13.39 The Gardaí met Monsignor Stenson in May 1996. They asked him for a copy of the Fr Edmondus file or at least for an opportunity to look at it. He refused stating he would need legal advice first. He said that canon law did not permit him to give permission for the file to be read.

13.40 Monsignor Stenson was also asked about the claim that Fr Edmondus had admitted the offence to him and a letter he wrote to Mrs Collins was shown to him. Monsignor Stenson expressed dismay on seeing the letter, saying that he would not have written that had he known that she would be handing over the letter to the Gardaí.

13.41 Despite having told Mrs Collins that Fr Edmondus had admitted to her abuse Monsignor Stenson refused to make a statement to that effect to the Gardaí.

13.42 In June 1996, Mrs Collins wrote to Archbishop Connell asking him to inform all the parishes in which Fr Edmondus had served that he had admitted child sexual abuse. Nothing was done about this until after his conviction.

Edenmore concerns

13.43 In October 1996, Monsignor Stenson spoke to the priest to whom the original concerns about children in Edenmore had been expressed and which were reported to Bishop Moriarty in 1993. This priest told Monsignor Stenson that Fr Edmondus had an extensive involvement with children and he had a “*disastrous*” relationship with adults and his fellow priests.

13.44 Monsignor Stenson then interviewed Fr Edmondus about his involvement with these children. Fr Edmondus told him that children aged ten to 12 used to change in his house. He said he did take photographs of them but there was nothing questionable in them. He said that there was absolutely no snooping or touching whatsoever. He said he stopped allowing them to change in his house after Bishop Moriarty spoke to him. It appears that Monsignor Stenson did not ask Fr Edmondus for the photographs.

Health board involvement, 1996

13.45 In November 1996 a meeting between health board officials and Monsignor Stenson took place in Archbishop’s House. The health board memo notes:

“the meeting was convened by Monsignor Stenson to convey to us concerns he had about children in the Edenmore Parish. Monsignor Stenson did not have hard information on these children, but he wished to share his concerns with us. These concerns centred around possible inappropriate behaviour on behalf of a priest Fr [Edmondus], who used to bring young girls from the Edenmore parish swimming. These girls used to change for swimming in his house and he then brought them swimming...No allegations of any inappropriate behaviour were ever made by these girls or their parents”.

These events are said to have happened in the year 1990.

13.46 A number of girls were identified and the health board's note stated that: "*given the vague nature of this referral, it was agreed that the Eastern Health Board would approach the parents of the girls and make discreet enquiries given the present climate*". However in December 1996 the senior social worker informed Monsignor Stenson that the Eastern Health Board was not able to follow up because of the vagueness of the addresses provided. The girls' names were known but their precise addresses were not.

Advisory panel

13.47 In December 1996, the case of Fr Edmondus was referred to the advisory panel. The panel recommended the following:

- His faculties should be withdrawn.
- All priests who served with him should be sounded out in relation to his past behaviour.
- The Archbishop should meet Marie Collins and offer a support person.
- The correct addresses for the children in Edenmore were to be sent to the health board when they became available; there should be a further meeting with the health board in January 1997 to discuss communication of information policy between the Archdiocese and the health board.

Meeting with Archbishop

13.48 In December 1996, Archbishop Connell met Mrs Collins and her support priest, Fr James Norman. Mrs Collins had approached this priest herself and he generously and selflessly agreed to assist her without seeking prior approval from the Archbishop and notwithstanding the fact that such assistance might put him in conflict with his diocese. When he first began to assist her he was not aware that the *Framework Document* provided for the assignment of support priests to those who had been abused. Eventually, in November 1996, he was formally appointed to that role in respect of Mrs Collins.

13.49 During this meeting, Archbishop Connell apologised to Mrs Collins for the hurt caused to her. In addition to giving evidence about that meeting, Fr Norman kept a note of it:

"During the meeting Marie raised a letter she sent to the Archbishop on the 4th of June [1996] concerning [Edmondus's] future. The

Archbishop failed to give an explanation of why he did not reply to this letter except to say that it had raised very difficult questions.

When Marie asked the Archbishop why he had not given a statement to the Gardai confirming that there was another case on file from the 1960s the Archbishop replied that it would undermine people's confidence in the Church if they thought that files were being passed to the Gardai, i.e. annulment cases. He also said that the previous case was not serious as it only involved the taking of photographs. Marie outlined in detail how having that type of photograph taken had hurt and damaged her. The Archbishop was very shocked and upset by the story Marie told him [...] One of the matters that upset Marie most was the statement by Cardinal Connell that the Framework document was not binding in canon or civil law⁵⁷ and that therefore he could follow what parts of it he wanted to follow. He claimed the Cardinal told her he had to protect the good name of the priest who had abused her".

The overall conclusion that Fr Norman reached regarding that meeting was that the Archbishop came across as someone who really cared for the victim but had not “got a clue” about how to go about dealing with the reality of the problem.

13.50 In January 1997, Fr Edmondus's faculties were withdrawn and he was formally released from the parish. He became a beneficiary of the Diocesan Clerical Fund (see Chapter 8).

13.51 In the meantime Monsignor Stenson was making further inquiries in the parishes where Fr Edmondus had served. He met the two youth workers who had brought their concerns about the activities of Fr Edmondus in Edenmore to the attention of the local priest in 1993. This priest did report to Bishop Moriarty as described above. The youth workers described children saying how “everyone knew about” Fr Edmondus; he hugged children and gave them money. The youth workers felt that the local priest had been dismissive of them when they went back to him. He had said to them that he

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This is an accurate statement (see Chapter 7).

had done something and there was nothing more he could do. Monsignor Stenson reported this to the health board in February 1997.

13.52 Mrs Collins continued to write to the Archbishop and Monsignor Stenson seeking to have other parishes informed of the activities of Fr Edmondus. She was concerned about the possibility of other victims.

Criminal charges, 1997

13.53 In March 1997 Fr Edmondus was arrested and charged with offences relating to the abuse of a child in a Co Wicklow parish and also the sexual abuse of Mrs Collins. The advisory panel noted that *“In the event that these charges are proven the Panel recommends not only that a public statement be made by the Diocese expressing its regret, but also that a proactive programme be developed to alert the parishes in which [Fr Edmondus] had previously worked”*.

13.54 In June 1997, Fr Edmondus pleaded guilty to two counts of indecent assault on Mrs Collins. Some days later he pleaded guilty to two counts of indecent assault on the girl in the Co Wicklow parish. He was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment in respect of the assaults on Mrs Collins and nine months imprisonment to run concurrently in respect of the Co Wicklow assaults. In November 1997 the total sentence was reduced on appeal to nine months. Prior to the court case he had met Mrs Collins and he had apologised to her and offered to make a financial contribution to her.

13.55 Following the conviction, in a statement to the media, Archbishop Connell said that the abuse of a child is wrong and evil. He also said that the diocese had been co-operating with the Gardaí. Fr Norman, Mrs Collins’s priest advisor, told Gardaí that Monsignor Stenson claimed that the diocese never claimed it had co-operated fully, with the emphasis on the word ‘fully’, with the Gardaí.

13.56 There were further meetings between the Archdiocese and the health board in respect of the Edenmore concerns but the relevant families were not contacted by the health board even though the Archdiocese was given the impression that they would be. A social worker explained to the Commission that the health board could not go around the area making inquiries as to

whether or not a child had been abused. The Gardaí could do that but "*the health board has to be extraordinarily careful about invading people's privacy and having as many facts as you can before you broach anything*". In effect it appears that the health board felt unable to take action at the time it was first reported to them. The social worker did contact the Gardaí involved in the criminal cases and was assured that there were no complaints from this area.

13.57 In January 1998, Archbishop Connell explained to Mrs Collins the procedures and factors to be taken into account by the Archdiocese when deciding what should be done with a priest convicted of child abuse. He explained that:

"as long as a priest who has offended remains incardinated in the Diocese, even if removed from ministry, he can receive the supervision and care which he will need to live a life free from further offence. This supervision would involve conditions regarding residence and life-style which would preclude the danger of relapses. In the case of a priest who is dismissed from the clerical state, that care and supervision is no longer possible".

13.58 Marie Collins replied, thanking Archbishop Connell for his letter and commented that the problem was a great deal more involved than she had first imagined. She stated that the letter had helped to ease her mind.

1998 - 2006

13.59 In May 1998, Fr Edmondus was released from prison. A letter from the Archdiocese to the Granada Institute stated that: "*The Archbishop has given clear indication that he does not envisage a return to ministry in this case, and so Fr [Edmondus] will be retired under monitored conditions*". It is clear that Fr Edmondus did not return to ministry but it is not clear precisely what the monitored conditions were. He was attending the Granada Institute and he was living with members of his family. According to the Granada Institute, part of the monitored conditions were that he was to continue to attend the Granada Institute on a quarterly basis for review, which he did.

13.60 In February 1999, the health board contacted the Archdiocese regarding Fr Edmondus because it was closing old files. The chancellor,

Monsignor Dolan and the social worker agreed that "*there was very little to be gained in our pursuit of the people in question*".

13.61 In February 2001, the *Would You Believe* programme on RTE television raised the issue of the handling of Mrs Collins's complaint and the current arrangements for monitoring Fr Edmondus. Her priest advisor told the Commission that the Archdiocese had been given every opportunity to have a representative go on the programme but would not do so unless the Archdiocese retained editorial control which was not given to it. It issued no apology on the programme to Mrs Collins. This caused her further upset.

13.62 In June 2001, the Archdiocese asked the Granada Institute for a report on Fr Edmondus. Granada reported that he was to receive therapeutic review sessions. The report also stated that "[o]ccasionally he accompanies his sister on shopping trips. He is very much aware of his need to stay away from contact with children and he is meticulous in observing this". It is not at all clear how Granada could have known this other than by accepting what they were told by Fr Edmondus.

13.63 In July 2002, a health board social worker telephoned the Archdiocese to inquire whether *Prime Time* had been in contact with the diocese regarding a programme which was to focus on the activities of Fr Edmondus in Edenmore. According to a note of the conversation made by the Archdiocese at the time, the social worker told the Archdiocese that she had told *Prime Time* that the health board had no contact other than conversations with the diocese. Again, according to the archdiocesan note, she also told the Archdiocese that she "*wanted to make sure that the Diocese and the Health Board were singing from the same hymn sheet*". She confirmed to the Archdiocese that nothing surfaced from the health board inquiries of that time and nothing had come to their attention since. In fact, no health board inquiries were made at the earlier stage. The social worker concerned emphatically denied, in an affidavit supplied to the Commission, that she had ever used the words quoted. She said the health board file shows that it was intended that she would contact the Archdiocese "*to establish the state of information given to Prime Time*".

13.64 At this stage, some five years after they had first been notified, and, it appears to the Commission, solely because of the publicity engendered by

the *Prime Time* programme, the senior officials in the health board decided to write to three girls from Edenmore – all of whom were now adults. One replied and told the health board that she had not been abused. The others did not reply. Again, the social worker has taken issue with the Commission's view that the decision to write to the girls was motivated by the publicity. It appears to the Commission that that decision was taken, not by the social worker, but by the health board management.

13.65 It is notable that senior health board managers, including the chief executive of the Northern Area Health Board, only became involved in dealing with the issues in Edenmore after those issues were raised by *Prime Time*.

13.66 Similarly, after the *Prime Time* programme, the Gardaí made further inquiries in Edenmore.

Subsequent complaints

13.67 Complaints in relation to Fr Edmondus continued to emerge.

Civil claims

13.68 After a considerable delay and much annoyance to her, Mrs Collins's civil claim, which was principally related to medical expenses, was settled by the Archdiocese. A settlement was also reached with the victim from Co Wicklow. Fr Edmondus made a personal contribution to the second settlement.

The Commission's assessment

The Archdiocese

13.69 This case was very badly handled by Archbishop McQuaid. Archbishop McQuaid's conclusion that Fr Edmondus's actions arose merely from a "*wonderment*" about the female anatomy is risible. The Commission considers there are two possible explanations for this stated view. Either Archbishop McQuaid could not deal with the fact that a priest who was in a privileged position of chaplain to a children's hospital fundamentally abused that position and sexually exploited vulnerable young children awaiting treatment or he needed an explanation which would deal with Bishop Dunne's justifiable concern and which would also justify not reporting the matter to

Rome. The Commission considers that the second explanation is the more likely one.

13.70 This case has a special significance because it was one of the earliest in the Commission's remit. The apparent cancellation by Archbishop McQuaid of his original plan to pursue the priest through the procedures of canon law was a disaster. It established a pattern of not holding abusers accountable which lasted for decades. Firmer treatment of this priest might have avoided much abuse in the future. The Archbishop and Bishop Dunne had no doubt that a serious crime had been committed but avoided taking any action as that would have involved Rome becoming involved in the case. The Archbishop appointed Bishop Dunne to investigate the case and, in the Commission's view, promptly undermined him in his position.

13.71 In the Commission's view, Archbishop McQuaid's actions fell very short of what should have been done. Given that he was fully aware of the 1922 instruction, there was no justification for his failure to set up a proper canonical process to deal with the matter. In fact, he deliberately manipulated the situation in a manner that did not involve him reporting the matter to Rome. No attempt was made to put protocols in place for chaplains throughout the many hospitals in which they were working in the Dublin Archdiocese and no attempt was made to monitor Fr Edmondus in other placements.

13.72 Archbishop Connell and several other priests also handled the case badly. The reaction of the local curate to the revelation of abuse by Mrs Collins in 1985 was inadequate. How he could have formed a view that she might be feeling guilty and in need of absolution when, in fact, she was disclosing abuse is difficult for the Commission to understand.

13.73 His assertion that, as priests, they had been advised in college not to seek the names of priests against whom allegations were being made in a spiritual or counselling context is a cause of great concern to the Commission. Such an attitude would explain in large measure the many appalling deficiencies in the Church's handling of complaints of child sexual abuse over the years. Even if he himself did not wish to hear the full details

of her complaint, he should have arranged for her to see his parish priest or another person who was in a position to deal with the complaint.

13.74 When concerns emerged from Edenmore in 1993, Archbishop Connell did not check if there were other complaints. This failure meant that the concerns were not taken as seriously as they should have been. There was no proper investigation of these concerns. For example, the youth workers who first raised them were not even interviewed at the time.

13.75 Archbishop Connell and Monsignor Stenson, while they were personally kind in their dealings with Mrs Collins, were not initially open with her. They failed to tell her that there was a pre-existing complaint and other concerns. Like many of those abused, she was thus isolated and left to believe that she was the only one who had complained.

13.76 Monsignor Stenson's failure to disclose all available information to the Gardaí is a cause of concern to the Commission. There was no doubt that Monsignor Stenson believed that Mrs Collins had been abused by Fr Edmondus. In the Commission's view, he should have been far more forthright with the Gardaí, but felt precluded from doing so by canon law. He left Mrs Collins in a difficult situation by telling her that the priest had admitted her abuse and then not acknowledging that to the Gardaí.

13.77 The Marie Collins case was reported to the diocese at the same time as the *Framework Document* was being implemented. The handling of this case by the Archdiocese demonstrates that the church guidelines which were set out in the *Framework Document* were not being implemented at this time by the Dublin Archdiocese. In particular the Archdiocese failed to notify her of her entitlement to have a support person to assist her in her dealings with the Archdiocese, nor did they provide a support priest for her. It was 11 months after the date for implementing the *Framework Document* before Fr Norman, whom she herself had approached to help her with her faith, was formally appointed as her priest support. Even when appointed, little information and no training on the role of support priest was given to Fr Norman. Monsignor Stenson points out that the *Framework Document* was not published until January 1996. He accepts that a support structure was not put in place in accordance with that document until sometime between November 1996 and

February 1997. He said he was satisfied from conversations that he had with Fr Norman that he was providing, albeit at an informal level, support for Mrs Collins.

13.78 The Commission is particularly concerned that the Archdiocese seems to have been in breach of the guideline which states: *“If the bishop or religious superior is satisfied that child sexual abuse has occurred, appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that the accused priest or religious does not remain in any pastoral appointment which affords access to children”*. The fact that Fr Edmondus was allowed to wear clerical attire, attend at the parish frequently and fulfil parish functions, despite having been allegedly removed from the parish by the Archbishop, was particularly worrying. Cardinal Connell told the Commission that it was not his fault that Fr Edmondus did not obey instructions. Unfortunately this comment again underlines the failure of the Archdiocese to properly monitor priests who are disciplined.

13.79 Everything that Mrs Collins managed to extract from the Archdiocese over the years in relation to the handling of child sexual abuse was given grudgingly and always after a struggle. Mrs Collins now believes, on the basis of bitter experience, that her Church cannot be trusted to deal properly with complaints of child sexual abuse and that legal measures are required to ensure compliance by the Church with proper standards of child protection. The Commission also notes that, notwithstanding her own reservations in the matter, there is no doubt that Mrs Collins, in her brave and often lonely campaign to show the Archdiocese how it had erred in its handling of child sexual abuse cases, was instrumental in changing the Archdiocese’s understanding and handling of these cases and of bringing about a far greater atmosphere of openness about the incidence and handling of child sexual abuse.

The Gardaí

13.80 There is no evidence that the Garda Commissioner investigated the initial complaint that was forwarded to him from the UK authorities in 1960. The Commission considers that it was totally inappropriate and a breach of duty for the Garda Commissioner to simply hand over the complaint to Archbishop McQuaid without carrying out any thorough investigation.

13.81 The Gardaí handled the subsequent complaints properly. They took great care and patience with their investigations.

Health board

13.82 The first complaint that came to the attention of the health board was the complaint from Co Wicklow. The health board in that area acted appropriately by reporting the matter to the Gardaí.

13.83 The health board's promises to act and subsequent failure to do so in relation to the Edenmore concerns are worrying. The health board may not have had the power to make further inquiries in Edenmore but the impression that further inquiries would be made was undoubtedly given to the Archdiocese. It is extraordinary that the health board did find the will and the capacity to act, and act at the highest level, when the *Prime Time* programme began to inquire about the matter.