

## **4.6 MONSIGNOR MICHAEL LEDWITH**

### **4.6.1 SEMINARIAN GROUP AND FR GERARD MCGINNITY**

It is alleged as follows:

The Inquiry spoke with a group of six former seminarians, a former student, and Fr Gerard McGinnity, formerly Senior Dean in Maynooth College, in relation to complaints made against Monsignor Ledwith to various bishops in 1983 and 1984.

The group of former seminarians maintain that they voiced concerns over their seminary training, Monsignor Ledwith's allegedly extravagant lifestyle and his alleged sexual orientation and propensity. They shared anxieties over Monsignor Ledwith's preferential treatment of certain students and his relationship with such students which they believed was inappropriate. One seminarian in particular said that, although he was in no doubt that he expressed to the bishops he met his concern over Monsignor Ledwith's sexual behaviour, this concern was definitely more of an anxiety with regard to orientation and propensity rather than with specific sexual activity. Contrary to media reports, no specific allegations were made against Monsignor Ledwith but rather a concern was expressed in the general sense. The other five seminarians who attended the Ferns Inquiry confirmed this version of events.

None of the bishops, still living, to whom it is contended this group of seminarians spoke and who were contacted by the Inquiry, could recall any mention of sexual impropriety at their meetings with the members of the group or any of them.

After meeting with various bishops, including Bishop Comiskey, the group was dissatisfied with the response received and reported the matter to Fr Gerard McGinnity in his capacity as senior Dean. Fr McGinnity spoke to Cardinal Tomàs O'Fiaich, Archbishop Dermot Ryan and Bishop Kevin McNamara (all of whom are now deceased). He also expressed his concerns in a confidential document returned by him to the Papal Nuncio. Bishop Casey became aware of the communication between Fr McGinnity and the three Bishops. At a subsequent meeting with Fr McGinnity, Bishop Casey called upon him to produce a victim of sexual abuse by Monsignor Ledwith. Fr McGinnity did not know of such a victim and therefore could not have produced one. His purpose had been to relate concerns as to the appropriateness of his relationship with some students. He never had any specific allegations to report. On the basis that a senior dean could not continue in the college after making such serious allegations against a Vice-President of the college, Fr McGinnity was required to remove himself from Maynooth on a year's sabbatical after which he was not re-admitted. Monsignor Ledwith was appointed President of Maynooth College ten months after Fr McGinnity's removal.

#### **4.6.2 RAYMOND**

Raymond alleged the following:

In 1994, Raymond alleged that he was abused by Monsignor Ledwith in the early 1980s when he was 13 years of age until after his 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. The exact age at when this abuse is alleged to have commenced is in dispute as Monsignor Ledwith states that he only became acquainted with this family after Raymond was 15 years old.

Raymond alleges that Monsignor Ledwith abused him in his, Raymond's home and in Monsignor Ledwith's house. The abuse amounted to touching and masturbation.

As a result of speaking to his parents about the abuse he went to meet Bishop Newman, Bishop of Limerick. Bishop Newman dismissed Raymond abruptly. The bishop's secretary, Fr Liam O'Sullivan, suggested that he should go to see Cardinal Daly. Cardinal Daly travelled to meet Raymond and then referred the matter to Bishop Comiskey who was Monsignor Ledwith's Bishop.

Bishop Comiskey informed the Inquiry that he met with Raymond and as a result he was more decisive in acting against Monsignor Ledwith. He set up a Canonical investigation and sought to have Monsignor Ledwith's priestly faculties removed. This is dealt with at Chapter Five of this Report.

The Diocese paid for intensive counselling for Raymond and his family. The Bishop was persuaded by Raymond's family to use his good offices to find employment for Raymond. Raymond and his family were angry and bitter over the events that had occurred and are continuing to receive counselling. Monsignor Ledwith reached a financial settlement with Raymond which did not involve the Diocese of Ferns, without any admission of liability. The settlement contained a "confidentiality clause" which precluded Raymond from discussing this matter and in particular precluded him from assisting in the canonical process initiated by the Trustees of Maynooth College which is discussed at Chapter Five of this Report.

Raymond did not discuss the alleged abuse with the Inquiry and when contacted by it through his lawyers, his lawyers informed the Inquiry that he was always concerned about any publicity with regard to this matter. He was genuinely fearful that if he got involved in making a detailed complaint to the Garda Authorities he might not be able to preserve his anonymity. He was concerned about the impact such publicity would have on his family.

Monsignor Ledwith was similarly prevented from discussing this matter with the Inquiry but has at all times attested to his innocence of all allegations made.

#### **4.6.3 SHANE**

Shane alleged the following:

Shane was a third year seminarian in Maynooth when he claims he was abused by Monsignor Ledwith in November 1994. He first spoke about this incident to his General Practitioner in October 1997 when he attended for treatment for depression. He had left seminary training in 1995 and had started work as a secondary school teacher. He continued to receive treatment for depression and in March 2000 whilst receiving hospital treatment, he arranged a meeting with his former Bishop to inform him that he intended making a formal complaint to the Gardai about the sexual abuse he had experienced. He did not reveal the name of the alleged perpetrator to his bishop.

The hospital authorities contacted the Diocese of Ferns and the Gardai in 2000. In his first statement to the Gardai in April 2000, Shane described in detail a very serious rape he claimed was perpetrated by Monsignor Ledwith. The Gardai commenced a thorough investigation of the allegation. Although witnesses spoken to by the Gardai all attested to a sudden change in Shane's personality in November 1994, none of them could confirm any question of sexual abuse being raised except for one infirmary nurse who said she was concerned about that at the time.

In June 2001 Shane completely withdrew all allegations against the Monsignor stating that no rape took place but that a consensual sexual encounter had occurred.

Monsignor Ledwith stated to the Gardai that he did not know Shane and had never had any relationship with him at any time, either consensual or otherwise. He further stated that he was not in the country on the dates which Shane stated as being the days on which the abuse is alleged to have occurred and was in a position to prove that.

This allegation was later than the allegation at 4.6.2 above and Monsignor Ledwith was no longer in active ministry in the diocese. Bishop Comiskey had already informed the bishop in the diocese where Monsignor Ledwith was residing about the previous allegation. Bishop Comiskey informed the Bishop of Seattle of this further allegation against Monsignor Ledwith but did not inform the Archbishop when the allegation had been completely withdrawn.

The Gardai considered the desirability of prosecuting Shane for having made a false allegation but recommended to the DPP, who accepted the advice, that no such prosecution be brought because the view was taken that Shane was mentally unstable.

Shane commenced High Court proceedings against Maynooth College and Monsignor Ledwith but his withdrawal of the criminal charge led to the discontinuance of this action.

Monsignor Ledwith has told the Inquiry that it was difficult to convey in words the difficulty and expense caused to him and his family by this allegation which was proved to be without foundation and was made by a person whom he stated he did not know and was alleged to have occurred when he was not in Ireland.

## **4.7 CANON MARTIN CLANCY (Deceased)**

### **4.7.1 MAEVE**

Maeve alleged the following:

Maeve complained of abuse by Canon Martin Clancy from approximately 1965 until 1968. She alleges that Canon Clancy came to her house in 1965. He asked Maeve's mother to let him speak with Maeve quietly upstairs in her bedroom. Maeve's mother agreed to him doing this and he molested Maeve in her room. This occurred three or four times per week and continued for a period of approximately three years. Maeve told the Inquiry that Canon Clancy inserted his finger into her vagina while questioning her about her development and about her boyfriends. On one occasion he asked her to his house where he had full intercourse with her..

Maeve went to England at the age of 15 to escape from Canon Clancy but returned a year later. Maeve thought her mother knew of the abuse which occurred in her bedroom but later discovered she had not had any idea of what was happening.. Two years before he died, in or about 1991, he arrived at Maeve's door and attempted to kiss her.

Maeve told the Inquiry that she informed a curate of the diocese of the abuse prior to Canon Clancy's death. She also told the Inquiry that she discussed being abused by Canon Clancy with another local curate prior to Canon Clancy's death. This curate confirmed his recollection of a lady living in the same housing estate as Maeve sharing with him difficulties which she experienced as a result of sexual abuse by priests. He believes this discussion took place in the early 1990s. This complaint was not made known to the diocesan authorities at that time, which only became aware of her complaint when Bishop Walsh met with her on 15 April 2003 at her request.

### **4.7.2 JUDY**

Judy alleged the following:

Judy suffered abuse by Canon Clancy, while she was in 5<sup>th</sup> class in Ballindaggin national school during the early 1970s. She alleged that Canon Clancy had taken charge of sex education classes. When she arrived at Canon Clancy's house for a class as directed by the school principal, she waited in the hall. He took her hand and led her into a study at the back of the house. Still holding her hand he sat down and brought her close to him between his legs. He then proceeded to physically examine Judy by removing her underclothing and feeling her very intimately and very painfully. Judy was 12 years of age at the time. Judy returned

to school and never told anyone what had occurred. She knows that other children were sent in similar circumstances to visit Canon Clancy.

Following these classes some of the children (three of whom Judy knows of) told their parents what Canon Clancy was doing and there were confrontations with Canon Clancy regarding his behaviour. There is even a suggestion that one parishioner physically assaulted Canon Clancy over his treatment of a child.

Judy confided what had happened to a friend of hers who is a former priest, in strictest confidence in or around 1990 or 1991. She told the Inquiry *"I was a child when I went in to that room in that house but when I left I was not a child"*. She feels that the Department of Education was in breach of its obligations to her in not properly monitoring Canon Clancy's sex education classes.

Judy has recently instituted civil proceedings in respect of this abuse although she did not make a complaint until after Canon Clancy's death.

#### 4.7.3 CIARA

Ciara alleged the following:

Ciara had an interest in music and regularly played in concerts. During one of those concerts, when she was aged 11, she was dragged into a dressing room by Canon Clancy and molested. This occurred in 1971 and abuse continued until after she became pregnant at 14 years of age. Canon Clancy was attached to Wexford at the time. At the age of 13 she was abused by Canon Clancy in his car. She was also abused at an event which took place in 1973 when Canon Clancy took Ciara and her sister Oonagh, to stay at his house. She told the Inquiry that Canon Clancy arranged for her sister Oonagh to be brought to a dance and Ciara was then abused by Canon Clancy. She stated that sexual intercourse began when she was 14 years of age and she became pregnant as a result.

In 1974 she went to England due to her pregnancy and left a note telling her parents that she was pregnant but not identifying the father. She was taken home by her mother six weeks later. She did not identify the father of her child to her parents or family at that stage. Her daughter Rachel was born in 1975 and Canon Clancy eventually acknowledged Rachel as his daughter when Ciara was aged 16 years. He gave her two cheques, each in the sum of £500 for Rachel's upkeep.

At 17 years of age she stated that Canon Clancy threatened to have Rachel taken from her if Ciara told anybody that he was the father.

Fr John Sinnott, who was executor of Canon Clancy's will wrote to Rachel on 18 August 1993 approximately three months after the death of Canon Clancy enclosing a cheque in the sum of £3,000 which he described as *"money which was invested by Canon Clancy (RIP) and which I was to send you on maturity. It was his wish that this money is to be used for your further musical education. I hope it will help you in your pursuits and I wish you success. Yours sincerely, John Sinnott PP."*

She reported the matter in 2003 to the diocesan authorities when she read Bishop Walsh's address to the Ballindaggin church.

#### **4.7.4 CLARE**

Clare alleged the following:

Clare suffered abuse by Canon Clancy from 12 years of age while attending Ballindaggin national school in the early 1980s. She told the Inquiry that she is aware of other girls who had been abused by Canon Clancy.

Canon Clancy suggested teaching her how to play music and arranged for music lessons at his house several times a week when she was 12 years old. When she told her friends, they laughed and told her that she was going to be “the next one”. At the time, she did not know what they meant by this. She was always brought into the same room and remembers a writing desk there where he used to sit while Clare stood beside him practising music. During these lessons he would put his arm around her and make her stand between his legs while he sat. He placed his hand underneath her shirt or blouse and fondled her breasts while she played music. He always made sure she was concentrating on the music while he was caressing her breasts. He then started to put his hand up underneath her skirt and inside her underwear while rubbing her vagina. On several occasions he asked if it hurt and she answered that it did. She subsequently wore trousers on visits to the house. However, he used to pull the zipper down and put his hands inside her trousers and pants and continue with the abuse. She felt she could not tell her parents about the abuse as they had tremendous faith in Canon Clancy.

Clare wrote to Bishop Comiskey by letter dated 25 April 1991 outlining the full nature and extent of the abuse she had suffered by Canon Clancy. Bishop Comiskey replied to this letter on 1 May and offered to meet her. She lived abroad at the time and did not meet with the Bishop. There was no further contact with Ciara by Bishop Comiskey.

The Inquiry is aware that Clare’s father, Patrick, wrote to Fr Clancy on 2 June 1991 requesting payment of a certain sum of money coupled with a threat to begin criminal proceedings. This letter was passed to An Garda Síochána by the Diocese which resulted in two Garda members visiting the family home. This is dealt with in detail at chapter 7.

Bishop Comiskey appointed Canon Clancy as curate at Killealy parish on 28 September 1991.

On 28 February 1996, Fr Cosgrave, the diocesan delegate wrote to Bishop Comiskey in relation to a meeting he had with Angela, mother of Clare, who appeared upset at the attitude of the priests and the bishop. She stated that her husband had suffered serious health problems as a result of this matter.

#### **4.7.5 KATE**

Kate alleged the following:

Kate told the Inquiry of being sexually abused by Canon Clancy at eight years of age while attending Ballindaggin national school. The abuse continued until her first year at secondary school. Canon Clancy often took Kate out of class to give her music lessons in school or in his house nearby. He also took her out of class to

play at masses and funerals. This was never questioned by any of her teachers or school superiors. The abuse started with touching and culminated in rape. Kate alleges that she was raped on a weekly basis until she was 12. The abuse stopped after Canon Clancy left Ballindaggin and was moved to Killealy in 1991. She refused to attend classes in Killealy when this was suggested by Canon Clancy.

When she heard that Canon Clancy had died, Kate, who was still attending school, told a teacher that she had been abused by him. She did not mention that she had been raped. Sister Madeleine Ryan who was the school Principal, notified Bishop Comiskey. She arranged for Kate to attend counselling. Kate attended one counselling session in Dublin but does not recall the detail of what was discussed. Sr Ryan told her parents about the alleged abuse and her parents also attended the same psychologist for one session on their own. Kate stated that the abuse was never spoken about afterwards and there was no follow up

The Inquiry corresponded with Sr Madeleine Ryan. She confirmed that Kate had told her about the abuse and that she had contacted Kate's mother to inform her of the allegation and to suggest counselling. She stated that she told Bishop Comiskey what was alleged by Kate and asked him to pay for counselling expenses for her and her parents. Bishop Comiskey agreed to do this. Sr Ryan stated, "At that point, I handed over to the parents total responsibility for their child".

In an appraisal of this case in August 1995, Bishop Comiskey said, "*With regard to the therapy of the 16 year old girl who is attending the [named school], she received one payment and that was the last we ever heard of her. I am not greatly concerned because I have great faith and confidence in the Sister who was Principal of that particular school. I am sure if she needed anything further, that the Principal would have seen to that.*" Bishop Comiskey told the Inquiry that he did not play any role in this case save agreeing to pay for therapy.

## **4.8 FR BETA**

### **4.8.1 TREVOR**

Trevor alleged the following:

Trevor was invited to Gorey for a weekend with Fr Beta who was a family friend. Trevor remembers dining with Chinese food and some cans of lager while Fr Beta sat on the floor next to him.

The remainder of the evening is unclear in Trevor's memory as he was unaccustomed to alcohol. He awoke to find himself lying in Fr Beta's bed with Fr Beta lying on his back undressed. He was conscious of the presence of semen on his body but did not know whose it was. He fell asleep while feeling in a state of shock.

He recalled Fr Beta driving him to the bus stop the following morning and as he got out of the car, Fr Beta said to him, "*remember, the both of us wanted it*". This comment, as well as the abuse generally, had a very serious impact on Trevor's life

subsequently and a devastating effect on his relationship with his wife and children.

Fr Beta recalls that Trevor visited him in his own car and therefore did not require a lift to the bus. He says they never discussed what had happened and that he never said "*remember we both wanted it*". The Inquiry is not in a position to adjudicate on such matters of disputed fact.

Trevor sought a meeting with Fr Beta. Fr Beta agreed to this meeting in April 2002. Trevor was accompanied by a social worker and Fr Beta was accompanied by a support priest. Fr Beta admitted that the incident had occurred and apologised for it. Trevor was deeply concerned and traumatised by the manner in which the meeting was conducted and the enquiries which were made subsequently by Fr Beta's support priest who sought to establish whether Trevor was in fact under 18 at the time of the abuse. Trevor maintained that irrespective of his age, the actions of Fr Beta were abusive of a relationship based on trust and integrity.

Trevor sued the Diocese of Ferns and has expressed his dissatisfaction with the litigation process. Part of this dissatisfaction arose from the fact that Fr Beta had admitted the abuse and Trevor therefore believed the diocese should not have engaged in what was for Trevor, a damaging legal wrangle.

The Gardai were informed but no prosecution took place on direction from the DPP because the Garda investigations indicated a discrepancy in the records which showed that Trevor might have been 18 at the time of the incident.

#### **4.8.2 BEN**

It is alleged as follows:

Neasa complained to a priest of the Diocese that her son Ben was abused by Fr Beta when he was six years of age. Neasa explained that Fr Beta was babysitting while Neasa and her husband attended a marriage encounter weekend. While she did not specify what the abuse was, Neasa confirmed that Fr Beta did not rape Ben. The diocesan priest immediately reported the complaint to the Bishop Walsh. Fr Denis Brennan, the diocesan delegate wrote to Ben on 22 August 2002, advising that the bishop was anxious to investigate the matter and seeking a meeting with Ben. The complaint does not appear to have proceeded further.

### **4.9 FR GAMMA**

#### **4.9.1 JULIE**

Julie alleged the following:

Julie complained of sexual abuse perpetrated by Fr Gamma when she was 9 years of age. Fr Gamma attended her home in the 1970s and on one occasion she

was sitting on a couch in her home when Fr Gamma approached her and sat beside her after telling her mother that he was going to pray over her. Julie had returned from hospital where she had had an operation on her lower abdomen. Fr Gamma put his right hand down inside her clothes and underwear and placed his hand directly onto her vagina. He fondled her and Julie could feel his fingers moving around the vaginal area. She said that she attempted to get up when Fr Gamma pushed the elbow of his arm into her stomach to restrain any movement. She recalls this lasting for approximately 5 minutes. She recalled another incident when she was between 11 and 13 years of age when Fr Gamma called to the house one afternoon whilst she was standing in her kitchen. Fr Gamma stood beside her and put his left arm around her shoulder and proceeded to put his hand under her clothing and fondle her left breast. She stated that Fr Gamma moved his hand and fingers around her left breast and felt her right breast as well. She felt embarrassed and uncomfortable and unable to stop Fr Gamma from touching her. She felt paralysed and frozen due to the fear she had of him. She remembered that her brother who was aged between 13 and 15 years at the time was present but Fr Gamma kept talking to him about general matters to distract him from what he was doing to Julie. She recalled this incident lasting for about 5 minutes. She believes she has blocked out many of her memories of childhood as a result of these instances of abuse. She also recalled an incident involving her younger sister. Fr Gamma attended her house and sat on a chair just inside the kitchen and called her younger sister over to him and started rubbing her legs while she was standing beside him. She recalled herself and her sister mentioning this incident to her mother but her mother dismissed it. At that stage she felt there was no point in discussing any other encounters she had with Fr Gamma with her mother as she would not be believed.

#### **4.9.2 GRACE**

Grace alleged the following:

During the early 1970s from 10 to 13 years of age, Grace alleges that she was regularly sexually abused by Fr Gamma. The abuse began when she commenced reading Mass as a fifth class primary student. This would involve her attending Friday afternoon practise sessions at church when she would be required to stand on the pulpit. She remembered being required to wear a dress as all school children wore dresses to school. The first occasion she recalled was when Fr Gamma stood behind her as she practised her reading on the pulpit and leaned over to her to turn the pages of the Bible from which she was reading and proceeded to run his hands up her thighs and up as far as her underwear. He then put his hand inside her underwear and ran it between both of her legs up her thighs. She recalled Fr Gamma fondling her with his hand was inside her underwear for 2 or 3 minutes. She continued reading all of this time. When she finished reading, Fr Gamma stopped. She recalled this occurring approximately 10 times on Friday afternoons. She also recalled Fr Gamma regularly offering to drive her to town after Mass on Sundays and her mother having no difficulty with this arrangement. She said that during such drives Fr Gamma would arrange for her to sit beside him in the front of the car and touch her legs during the drive. She recalled this occurring approximately four times. At 11 years of age, she recalled Fr Gamma attending her house when she was alone and whilst

she was standing in her kitchen, he dropped a small box of matches on the floor at his feet and ordered her to bend down and pick up the matches and come back slowly to him. As she bent down and picked up the matches and attempted to rise up again she was aware that Fr Gamma's penis was exposed. She said it was erect at the time and she does not remember anything else about the incident but believes that he wanted her to perform oral sex. She does not remember if she did so. She recalled a further incident when she was approximately 12 years of age and in first year at the local secondary school when Fr Gamma entered the church which she was attending with her sister and pulled down the top of her dungarees. She felt uncomfortable but nothing else untoward happened. She stated that the abuse stopped after this incident and no abuse occurred from 13 years of age onwards.

Grace has alleged that the abuse had a devastating impact upon her life subsequently and her difficulty in forming relationships. She was afraid at all stages to mention the abuse to any other person and only recently as a result of being hospitalised for a stress-related illness and watching a Prime Time programme on television she has become able to talk about the abuse to members of her family. Grace was also particularly upset that Fr Gamma had performed her wedding ceremony and acted with complete ignorance as to the abuse which he perpetrated against her many years beforehand.

Her brother approached a local priest, and informed him that Grace wished to make a complaint in relation to the abuse by a priest. It was clear from Grace's brother that her allegation referred to a time when she was still a minor and this priest subsequently met with Grace who alleged that she had been sexually abused as a minor by Fr Gamma during his time as curate in a half-parish in the Diocese. This priest informed Grace that he was obliged to pass the information on to An Garda Síochána and he encouraged her to do the same. He offered to arrange a meeting between Grace and Fr Denis Brennan, diocesan delegate for child sexual abuse. He also liaised with a local Garda whom he notified of the complaint and provided diocesan details in the form of Confirmation records of the complainant in order to assist his investigation.

Grace met with Fr Brennan, the diocesan delegate on 1 November 2002 and made a complaint of child sexual abuse against Fr Gamma which had continued for a period of approximately three years in the early 1970s. Grace also made statements of complaint to An Garda Síochána in November 2002 and July 2003.

#### **4.9.3 RUTH**

Ruth alleged the following:

A priest of the Diocese explained to Bishop Walsh on 21 May 2003 that a woman named Ruth had told him that Fr Gamma had prepared her marriage papers and on that occasion she vowed she would never be alone with him again. She mentioned that the tone of Fr Gamma's conversation and actions left her very uneasy and she had also heard of a lot of people who had bad experiences with him in the north of

the county. The impression this priest got was that these were young people. In particular, Ruth alleged in a subsequent meeting with Fr Dennis Brennan that when she was walking back to the parochial house from the sacristy, Fr Gamma put his hand around her waist and dug his fingers into her hip bones.

#### **4.9.4 ORLA AND SUSAN**

Orla and Susan alleged the following;

A priest of the Diocese contacted Fr John Carroll, the diocesan secretary in late December 2002 in relation to an incident at Wexford General Hospital. A report on the incident was made by a nurse in the intensive care ward to the diocesan delegate who said that Orla, who was a patient in the ward, appeared to suffer a seizure or a fit when approached by Fr Gamma. Orla's sister Susan, was present at the time and informed the nurse that Fr Gamma was not to be allowed near her sister again. Orla and her sister Susan alleged prior sexual impropriety on Fr Gamma's part against each of them. The diocesan delegate, Fr Denis Brennan wrote to Susan on 18 February 2003 seeking a meeting but no response to that letter appears on the diocesan files.

Orla complained to Gardai of child sexual abuse by Fr Gamma in the early 1980s at the vestry of a half-parish in the Diocese during Confirmation preparation exercises when she attended Fr Gamma for Confession. Fr Gamma would sit beside her and always pull her closer to him and proceed to start rubbing her up and down on her arm, shoulders, waist, her backside and her thighs and knees in a continuous motion. She said that Fr Gamma also ran his fingers under her underwear. Orla told her father about the abuse some time later. Fr Gamma called to her house thereafter and her father raised a complaint with Fr Gamma who described Orla as evil. Orla mentioned that three of her friends had also confided in her that they were abused in a similar way by Fr Gamma.

#### **4.9.5 BERNADETTE**

Bernadette alleged the following:

During the mid-1970s, when Bernadette was seven or eight years of age, Fr Gamma visited her family home 5 or 6 times a year. During one of those occasions when she was in the kitchen with her sister and mother Fr Gamma sat down on an armchair and put her on his knee and rubbed his hand up and down her thigh. Some time later, he visited again and he put his arm over her shoulders and started rubbing his hand on her shoulder and down her back. On another occasion, she was at home with her sister and mother, and her sister who is almost 2 years older than her was standing at the cooker in front of Fr Gamma who brought her back towards him and put both of his hands down her top and started rubbing his hands around her chest area. Her sister was 9 or 10 years of age at the time. Bernadette first complained about this alleged abuse to the Gardai in 2002.

#### **4.9.6 GRÁINNE**

Gráinne alleged the following:

Prior to her wedding ceremony in the mid-1970s, Fr Gamma directed that Gráinne and her husband attend the local church for a pre-marriage talk. When she attended the church, she met with Fr Gamma in the vestry and Fr Gamma asked to speak with her alone. She spoke for a few minutes with Fr Gamma and when this conversation finished and she got up to leave, Fr Gamma put his hand on the door handle effectively blocking her exit. He then put his right hand on her backside and he groped her and told her that she had very small panties on and they must barely have covered her. She told Fr Gamma that her fiancée was outside and he let her go. She left the vestry and Fr Gamma stayed inside. She told her fiancée and father immediately afterwards. She became very upset a few weeks later when Fr Gamma performed the ceremony on her wedding day. She was 19 years old at the time. Gráinne first complained of this abuse in 2002 to the Gardai.

#### **4.9.7 CAROLINE**

Caroline alleged the following:

Caroline married in the early 1970s at 16 years of age and at 18 years of age was pregnant with her second child. She was living with her parents at the time. Fr Gamma called to her house and offered to give her a “maternity blessing”. He ordered her to go to her room and he would then attend with her for the blessing. Whilst there, Caroline sat in a chair in her bedroom and Fr Gamma stood to one side of her. He then brought one hand onto her stomach and the other was placed on her head. She could hear him talking lowly and did not know if he was praying. He then brought one hand underneath her bra and she could feel his hand on her breast. He was feeling her breasts for a few seconds and then brought the same hand out from her breasts over her stomach and down to her genital area. He fondled with his fingers around her genital area for a few seconds. He then took away his hand and stopped praying and went to the kitchen to speak to her mother and left. She did not tell her family. She said that Fr Gamma called to her house regularly after that and when she was alone in the house she would not answer the door to him. She said that she only made a statement to An Garda Síochána in July 2003 when she had heard that another person had made a statement of complaint against Fr Gamma.

#### **4.9.8 HILARY**

Hilary alleged the following:

In the early 1970s whilst she was in fifth class, Fr Gamma offered Hilary a lift from the church gates to her house and, because of other passengers in the car, she was left with no choice but to take the front seat. During the drive to her house, Fr Gamma squeezed her knee and moved his hand up her leg under her skirt and he touched her underwear but at that stage Hilary pulled away. The next incident she

recalled occurred in the same year when her class was going to Church to do choir practise for Confirmation and she was getting a lift with Fr Gamma. Again, the back of the car was so full that she had no option but to get into the front of the car and when her safety belt became unstuck, Fr Gamma reached across her and caught hold of the safety belt and in the process squeezed her right breast and she then grabbed the belt and told him that she could take care of it. She did not tell her family or teacher about the abuse but confided in a friend at the time. She first spoke about these events to the Gardai in 2003.

#### **4.9.9 DEIRDRE**

Deirdre alleged the following:

Deirdre made a statement to An Garda Síochána in December 2002 alleging inappropriate touching on more than one occasion by Fr Gamma when she was a teenager and Fr Gamma was a curate. She did not want to pursue the matter at that stage owing to the fact that her elderly mother was still alive and for other personal reasons. No further detail is known by the Inquiry in respect of this complaint of abuse.

#### **4.9.10 MARIE**

Marie alleged the following:

Whilst preparing for her First Holy Communion at approximately 8 years of age in the early 1980s, Marie attended Fr Gamma for Confession. She recalled Fr Gamma appearing at first as very affectionate as he was touching her hair and face and whilst she was kneeling he also stroked the back of her legs. She said he would talk normally as if nothing was happening during this process and would bring his hand directly up her legs to her private parts. She was wearing a skirt and underwear. She remembers him putting his fingers inside her underwear and moving his fingers around her private parts. She said there was no penetration by Fr Gamma on the first occasion. She had presumed that this was the test for Holy Communion. She said there were numerous other times that Fr Gamma heard Confessions in her classroom and the abuse is alleged to have continued up to the time she made her First Holy Communion.

She remembered another time shortly after the incidents described whilst Fr Gamma was hearing her Confession and she was kneeling down beside him and he brought his hand onto her legs and began feeling her legs. She said the touching would always take place at the back of her legs and he brought his hand up to her private parts and put his fingers inside her. She remembered feeling sore, painful and uncomfortable. One incident of penetration took place during the hearing of these Confessions. Marie told her sister about the abuse a number of years later and in 2003 she told her mother about it. Marie later developed an addiction to alcohol, overspending and shoplifting as a result of which she was charged with a criminal offence. She has also attempted suicide on three different occasions. She feels depressed and suicidal on many occasions which she attributes to the abuse experienced by her as a child.. She feels her life is ruined and shattered and she is in heavy financial trouble as a result of her disabilities.

## **4.10 FR DELTA**

### **4.10.1 BILL**

Bill alleged the following:

The Inquiry is aware of a complaint of abuse by Fr Delta made by Bill whilst he, Bill was a pupil in St Peter's College which resulted in a settlement being reached by the alleged victim and Fr Delta. The Inquiry is not aware of any detail of the alleged abuse.

The settlement, but not the details of the complaint, was made known to the Diocese of Ferns. This notification led to Fr Delta's retirement in September, 2002 and his subsequent assessment and treatment. The Diocese notified An Garda Síochána on 11 October 2002, and the South Eastern Health Board on 4 December 2002.

### **4.10.2 TERRY**

Terry alleged the following:

Terry made a complaint against this priest to Fr Denis Brennan, diocesan delegate, on 21 March, 2003. He complained of being sexually abused during the early 1960s while he was a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student at St Peter's College and Fr Delta was on the staff there. He said the abuse consisted of Fr Delta touching his genital area repeatedly. He did not mention the abuse to anybody until he received counselling in 1999 when he informed the Diocese.

Fr Delta was retired and receiving treatment at this stage. Fr Dennis Brennan notified An Garda Síochána and the South Eastern Health Board by letter dated 15 April 2003.

### **4.10.3 DES**

Des alleged the following:

In the mid 1960s Des, who was over 18 years of age at the time, requested a "Letter of Freedom" from Fr Delta in respect of his forthcoming marriage. On one of several visits to Fr Delta's house, Fr Delta asked Des to unfasten his trousers in order for Fr Delta to check that "everything down there was in working order". Des unbuttoned his trousers and Fr Delta fondled his private parts for approximately ten minutes. Des felt that Fr Delta was attempting to arouse him. This alleged abuse

occurred shortly after Fr Delta had been transferred from a position in St Peter's college at his own request because of incidents of abuse that had occurred with boys there.

Des was deeply traumatised by the incident. He reported the incident to the Diocese on 5 December 2003 whereupon a support person was recommended.

#### **4.10.4 UNIDENTIFIED STUDENTS**

The Inquiry is aware of allegations of sexual abuse of secondary school pupils in St Peter's by Fr Delta in the mid-1960s. At Fr Delta's own request, the Bishop of Ferns, Bishop Donal Herlihy removed Fr Delta from his teaching position in the college and appointed him to a curacy in the Diocese. One complainant has indicated to the Inquiry that Bishop Herlihy was aware of allegations he made against Fr Delta at that time.

#### **4.11 FR EPSILON (Deceased)**

##### **4.11.1 ANDREW**

Andrew alleged the following:

Andrew reported to Bishop Walsh at a meeting on 29 May 2002, several instances of sexual abuse perpetrated against him by the late Fr Epsilon during the early 1960s while he was a student at St Peter's College. Fr Epsilon was a senior member of staff at the time. During his second year, Fr Epsilon asked him to attend his, Fr Epsilon's, room on the pretext of examining his injured leg. In the course of his visit he was stripped naked by Fr Epsilon who touched his groin area repeatedly. He also described another incident where a clerical student sent him and others up to Fr Epsilon's room for punishment. Fr Epsilon told four boys to remove their trousers and he beat them with a billiard cue. This happened on a number of occasions.

The same clerical student was also involved in another incident. He sent Andrew to Fr Epsilon's room for punishment. When he arrived at Fr Epsilon's room, Andrew was blindfolded, fondled and beaten. Fr Epsilon told him that he would act as a doctor. After Andrew left the College Fr Epsilon sent a letter to Andrew asking if he would like to visit the "College doctor". Andrew ignored this invitation and discarded the letter. Andrew believes that he told another priest about the abuse although that priest does not recall such a conversation.

##### **4.11.2 SAM**

Sam (see also 4.1.1) alleged the following:

Sam told the Inquiry that on one occasion when he was in study at St Peter's College in the mid-1960s, he was told by Fr Epsilon that there was a researcher at the college from America doing research on the development of boys and that he,

Sam, would be an ideal candidate in terms of age and height. Sam was asked to volunteer and told what room to report to. He went to a room in St Peter's to await the "researcher's" arrival where he was blindfolded, stripped and caned. His penis was measured and he thinks, but cannot be certain, that he was masturbated. Because he was blindfolded during this incident, Sam is not in a position to state categorically that he was abused by Fr Epsilon although he has said to this Inquiry that he is 99% certain that it was him. He said that for years he found it very difficult to believe that Fr Epsilon could have abused him in that way as he was a priest whom Sam held in very high esteem and had admired greatly. These complaints arose some years after the death of Fr Epsilon.

## **4.12 FR IOTA**

### **4.12.1 PAMELA**

Pamela alleged the following:

In the early 1970s when Pamela was 13/14 years of age, Pamela met Fr Iota who was then chaplain to her local youth club. Fr Iota was in his late 20s at that time and an abusive relationship developed between Pamela and Fr Iota over the next number of years which in its latter stages included oral sex and heavy petting but stopped short of penetrative sex. The abuse would take place primarily at St Peter's College. She described how Fr Iota would secretly bring her to his rooms at St Peter's taking care to avoid being detected by anybody during the process. She said that Fr Iota would often appear at her school at the end of the day and drive her directly from school to his rooms at St Peter's College. She stated that Fr Iota used to approach her and direct her to sit on his knee whilst he had an erection. She said that Fr Iota had said to her repeatedly that he wished to marry her. When she was approximately 15 years of age she disclosed this abusive relationship with Fr Iota to a local curate, Fr Kappa, as it was causing her great distress. She is unsure as to whether or not Fr Kappa reported her complaint to any other authority.

The abuse by Fr Iota continued. Approximately one year after she had complained to Fr Kappa, a meeting was arranged and attended by Fr Kappa, for the purpose of requesting Fr Iota to desist from further abuse. Fr Iota told Pamela at this meeting that he did not want to marry her and he would not leave the priesthood because of his relationship with her. For Pamela the purpose of the meeting had been to persuade Fr Iota to end the abuse which was causing her great distress.

Shortly after her meeting with Fr Iota and Fr Kappa, Pamela attempted to commit suicide by taking an overdose of antidepressant tablets. She attended St Patrick's Hospital in Dublin for medical treatment immediately after her suicide attempt and believes that the cost of such treatment may have been discharged by the Diocese of Ferns.

Pamela stated that she had disclosed what was happening with Fr Iota to her General Practitioner and was prescribed antidepressants following such notification which she subsequently used in her suicide attempt. This doctor has informed the Inquiry that he

spoke to Bishop Herlihy about the situation after the suicide attempt and advised him to do something about it.

Fr Iota was transferred out of the parish after Pamela's suicide attempt and diocesan records show that a letter from Bishop Herlihy to the Cardinal at Westminster cites the reason for Fr Iota's departure as follows;

*"Father Iota had some involvement with a girl, which is now happily terminated. As a result, he is anxious and has been advised to spend some time away from this diocese. He is a gentle refined young man, but has always demanded understanding and sympathy."*

Pamela has suffered greatly as a result of the abuse.

Pamela contacted the acting diocesan delegate in May 2005 and reported being abused by Fr Iota whilst she was a child. She sought details of any information contained on diocesan files in relation to her. She also indicated to the Delegate that she was abused by a second priest but did not provide any details in relation to that abuse. She has stated to the Inquiry that she felt pressurised into making a written statement detailing the abuse. The Diocese was in the position of having to report this allegation to the Inquiry in circumstances where its work was nearing completion and therefore a formal complaint was seen as important. She was reluctant to do provide a written complaint and consulted the One-in-Four organisation who requested that all future communication with Pamela would be conducted through their office.

## **4.13 FR KAPPA**

### **4.13.1 PAMELA**

Pamela alleged the following:

Pamela reported to Fr Kappa in the early 1970s, her abusive relationship with Fr Iota, and a close relationship developed between Fr Kappa and Pamela thereafter. When Pamela was aged approximately 17 years, she was abused by Fr Kappa who regularly supplied her with alcoholic drink. She said that the abuse commenced through kissing and hugging and later developed into full sexual intercourse which took place when she was 18 years of age. She recalled one incident when she was supplied with a lot of alcohol and brought back to a chalet opposite a local church and she awoke the following morning in Fr Kappa's bed. She said this was the first occasion in which she did not spend the night at home. Pamela became pregnant very shortly after sexual intercourse with Fr Kappa had commenced and she believes her child was fathered by Fr Kappa.

When she became pregnant it was arranged by Fr Kappa that she would be sent to a family in a different county where she would work at general cleaning and typing duties until she gave birth and her child would then be placed for adoption. Fr Kappa had also orchestrated an arrangement whereby she would write letters that would in turn be passed to an Irish priest in Rome and posted from there to her father and employer in Wexford. She said that this was aimed at creating an impression that she

was working as an *au pair* in Rome. However, she left this residence after a short while and travelled to London.

Pamela eventually returned home to give birth to her child. Fr Kappa refused to recognise Pamela's child as his own.

Pamela has suffered greatly as a result of such abuse and has attended a stress counsellor at the advice of a medical consultant in recent times.

Pamela contacted the acting diocesan delegate, in May 2005, and reported being abused by two priests but she did not name Fr Kappa or provide any details in relation to abuse by him.

#### **4.14 FR LAMDA**

##### **4.14.1 JONATHON**

Jonathon alleged the following:

*In a letter dated 5 November 1996 sent to Bishop Comiskey, Jonathon who was then working abroad, stated to Bishop Comiskey; "I had been struggling for a long time with bouts of terrible depression – some of which you may know about, but all of which hardly anyone knows. In trying to reach to the roots of this, following counselling, I feel free to admit that I too am a victim of abuse as an altar boy – by a priest of the Diocese (now deceased!). He was a dear friend of my parents. An "adopted uncle". "Our Sponsor" during college days (when fees were obligatory!) so it was unthinkable that one could complain. All I knew was that I hated his behaviour but just buried the experiences."*

Jonathon went on to state in this letter that his counsellor would write directly to Bishop Comiskey and this counsellor was free to share with the Bishop whatever he felt like sharing. Jonathon spoke with the Inquiry but did not wish to elaborate on this matter.

#### **4.15 FR ZETA (deceased)**

##### **4.15.1 Anonymous Complaint.**

It was alleged as follows:

In March 1996, the Diocese of Ferns received an anonymous letter accusing a priest in a named parish of committing sexual offences against school boys in the local Primary School in the years in the late 1980s. The letter did not identify the priest

other than to say that he was still in the named parish. Fr William Cosgrave, the diocesan delegate said that one of the priests serving in the named parish had served there for some time and had been chaplain and confessor to the pupils of the local Primary School for many years. He therefore believed that the anonymous letter referred to this Priest who is named by the Inquiry as Fr Zeta. Fr Zeta was still alive at the time of this complaint but no investigation of it took place. He has since died.

#### **4.15.2 Primary School Complaint.**

The Inquiry spoke with a former school teacher at a primary school in the diocese who taught at that school when Fr Zeta was chaplain and confessor there. He said that Fr Zeta had a practice of hearing the Confession of young boys in the staff room of the school and on one occasion when he attended the staff room he saw Fr Zeta with a young boy on his knee. Fr Zeta abruptly pushed the boy off when the school teacher entered the room. The matter was subsequently reported at a staff meeting but according to this teacher was dismissed by a member of the religious order who occupied a senior position in the school at that time. This member of a religious order has been the subject of allegations of child sexual abuse received by this Inquiry although such allegations could not be investigated as they did not come within the Terms of Reference. Notwithstanding this reaction, the teacher's reporting of the incident to the meeting appeared to have resulted in no more Confessions being heard by Fr Zeta in the staff room.

The teacher told the Inquiry that Fr Zeta would visit the school and catch young boys under the arms and ask them silly and often inappropriate questions. He was told by one young boy that Fr Zeta had asked him how often he masturbated.

#### **4.16 FR SIGMA (Deceased)**

##### **4.16.1 BREDA**

Breda alleged the following:

Breda complained of sexual abuse perpetrated on her by Fr Sigma in Monageer and Knock in the late 1970s for a four year period commencing when she was 8 years old. She recalled that Fr Sigma came into her house and he sat her up on his knee putting his hand up her skirt.

Breda telephoned Fr Tommy Brennan, diocesan secretary, in September 1996 and told him that she had been sexually abused by Fr Sigma when she was a young girl. She informed Fr Brennan that she was in counselling at that time and had a mental block surrounding the events of her life before the age of 12 or 13 years. Fr Brennan wrote to Bishop Comiskey in December 1997 with a memorandum of the telephone conversation with the then unidentified Breda.

Breda told the Inquiry that there were lots of rumours surrounding Fr Sigma throughout the parish, mainly concerning girls. She is aware of other women in counselling as a result of child sexual abuse by this priest. She was in counselling and needed financial help in order to continue it and a limited period of counselling was paid for by the Diocese.

Breda recalled an incident of abuse which occurred when she was staying in Fr Sigma's house with her family including her two sisters. Fr Sigma took her into his bed and raped her. She said that the following night she pretended to be asleep until she saw him approach one of her sisters at which point she let him know she was awake in order to prevent her sister from suffering the abuse she had suffered the previous night. She got into bed with him where further abuse occurred. Breda attempted suicide on a few occasions and suffered great difficulty with self-esteem as a result of the abuse.

Fr Brennan received a letter from Bishop Comiskey stating; *"At last I have my fears or suspicions confirmed. I always thought that there were some unsavoury undercurrents to the allegations of sexual abuse in Monageer. I am saddened but not surprised by this woman's revelations."*

Bishop Comiskey could not explain to the Inquiry why he wrote those words and does not recall any specific allegations about Fr Sigma. He said he must have heard something at the time which he cannot now recall.

Fr Brennan was contacted in December 1997 by a financial advisor to Breda who said she suffered serious financial problems largely due to her ongoing attendance at counselling sessions because of the abuse. Fr Brennan arranged for the discharge of outstanding counselling fees for approximately ten sessions on behalf of the diocese. After completion of her counselling sessions, Breda did not have further contact with the diocese although she is still in counselling today. Fr Sigma was deceased at the time this allegation was made.

## **4.17 FR UPSILON**

### **4.17.1 DENIS**

Denis alleged the following:

Denis alleged abuse by Fr Upsilon over an eight year period in the late 1970s and early 1980s to a social worker from the East Coast Area Health Board in 1998. The East Coast Area Health Board informed the South Eastern Health Board, which in turn informed the Gardaí. Denis subsequently made a statement to Gardaí withdrawing the allegation of abuse. Gardaí notified the South Eastern

Health Board that, in light of this withdrawal, they could not proceed with the matter. The SEHB contacted the East Coast Area Health Board who tried to trace Denis but to no avail. The Diocese was made aware of this complaint by this Inquiry in 2004. Fr Upsilon was asked by Bishop Eamonn Walsh to stand down from his ministry pending further investigation and he did this.

#### **4.18 FR THETA (Deceased)**

##### **4.18.1 DON**

Don alleged the following:

Fr Theta was a curate in the Diocese and knew Don's mother. Following an accident in which Don broke his leg, Fr Theta suggested that Don should attend Lourdes with him. Don was 14 years of age at this time. Fr Theta paid for the trip. On the way back they stayed in a Dublin hotel. Fr Theta booked a twin room for them and pushed the two beds together. When Don got into bed Fr Theta started to kiss him on the mouth but stopped when Don turned away from him. Don believes that Fr Theta was attempting to rape him and has stated that he has suffered from depression and has needed counselling as a result.

Don told the Inquiry that he informed the Diocese of this incident in 2003, after the death of Fr Theta. No action could therefore be taken other than to provide Don with support. The Diocese has done this and Sr. Helen O'Riordan meets with Don regularly. Don has expressed himself as satisfied with the support extended to him by the Diocese.

#### **4.19 FR OMIKRON**

##### **4.19.1 JENNY**

Jenny alleged the following:

In order to assess a medical condition, Jenny's doctors suggested that a photograph be taken at regular intervals and sent to him. This occurred during the 1950s. Because Fr Omikron was a family friend and had an interest in photography, Jenny's mother asked him to take the photographs and was present during the sessions.

Jenny was completely naked while the photos were taken. She stated that the experience was loaded with sexual pressure for her and although Fr Omikron

remained a close family friend he never talked to her from then on. She later identified the contrast in having such photos taken by a medical specialist who did not require her to be naked and who did not make her feel embarrassed.

She first told the diocesan delegate about this experience in 2000 and she alleged that the events had a marked effect on her life as she carried the belief that she was at fault. She said the guilt also affected her professional life. She attended counselling for substantial periods of her adult life.

Jenny believes that the handling of her complaint by Bishop Comiskey exacerbated any injury or damage which she suffered as a result of the abuse.

Jenny took issue with Bishop Comiskey not offering to discharge fully all treatment costs incurred by her up to the date of her complaint and also his reluctance to offer an apology on behalf of the Diocese. Bishop Comiskey explained that he could not offer an apology on behalf of a priest who was deceased and he paid IR£4,000.00 towards counselling costs when a sum of IR£4,400.00 was sought.

Bishop Walsh discharged the full cost of Jenny's counselling fees and apologised to her for the abuse she suffered. Jenny wrote to Fr Denis Brennan, diocesan delegate, in August 2002 and expressed herself satisfied with Bishop Walsh's response.

Fr Omikron was long since deceased when this allegation was first made to the Diocese.

#### **4.20 FR TAU (Deceased)**

##### **4.20.1 KIERAN**

Kieran alleged the following:

It was alleged by Kieran (4.5.22) that when he reported an allegation of sexual abuse against Fr Fortune to Fr Tau, Fr Tau himself abused Kieran by requiring him to demonstrate what Fr Fortune had done to him and by touching his penis. Kieran immediately rebuked such an advance. Kieran told the Inquiry that Fr Tau eventually apologised to Kieran for what had occurred and assured him that he had reported the matter to Bishop Comiskey. No record of this complaint exists on the diocesan files which the Inquiry has seen.

## **4.21 FR OMEGA**

### **4.21.1 UNIDENTIFIED BOY AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOL COMPLAINT.**

It is alleged as follows:

On 20 October 1994, a teacher informed the local Public Health Nurse of a 14 year old boy who was not attending school, was isolated and who had befriended a local curate. The Nurse made a child abuse notification. The Director of Community Care (DCC) for the South Eastern Health Board discussed the curate with the Principal of a local school and discovered that the priest had been transferred from the school in the late 1980s because he had shown what were considered to be inappropriate pictures to children in the course of sex education classes. The DCC reported this to the Gardai who interviewed the boy's mother. She was content with the relationship between her son and the priest and was satisfied that nothing untoward had occurred or was occurring between them. The diocese became aware of these matters in 2004 following notification by this Inquiry. Fr Omega was asked to stand aside from active ministry and to attend a psychologist for assessment to explore any boundary issues which he might have. He agreed to do so.

## **UNNAMED PRIESTS**

### **AA and BB**

Both AA and BB made complaints in relation to the conduct of priests identified by them. Both complainants felt deeply about matters which troubled them over a period of years and in relation to which they wrote extensively to the diocese. Their complaints were made known to the Gardai by the Bishop. The correspondence was considered by the Inquiry and it is satisfied that the diocese and the Gardai were justified in taking no further action in relation to either complaint. The Inquiry believes it would be unfair to the priest and hurtful to the complainants to analyse here the complaints made.