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Archbishop calls for fresh inquiry into laundries

By Juno McEnroe

Wednesday, July 25, 2012

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin called for fresh inquiries into care in the Magdalene laundries, mother-and-baby homes, and other institutions, to examine where the Church, serving the most deprived, went wrong.

The Archbishop of Dublin said the Church also needed to find a new language, but not be excluded from general society.

Dr Martin said priests needed support after the wave of abuse scandals that have engulfed the Church.

Some "research-based investigation", less adversarial than a full-blown inquiry, could bring the truth to light and serve victims of abuse, he said.

These new forms of investigations could better address such issues as the Magdalene Laundries or the quality of care in some mother-and-baby homes and other institutions, he added. This could involve some form of public participation, it was added.

"I am well aware that there are some who would willingly instrumentalise such questions simply to damage the Church. But if abuses did take place, we owe it to the victims and to the Church itself to bring the truth to light and to foster repentance in a way which is honest and compassionate."

The Government has already set up an separate inter-departmental committee to establish the full facts about the laundries and the state's involvement with them. It is set to report in the autumn.

The UN committee against torture has already called for an inquiry after a long-running campaign by female survivors.

Dr Martin said the fact that thousands of children were abused within institutions in Ireland was a scar that the Church would bear for generations to come.

There was also no great public appetite in establishing new and costly investigations into the further aspects of the abuse scandal, he said.

He told the MacGill Summer School that priests had experienced a very difficult time in recent years because of the trauma of the scandals of sexual abuse, but also because of the changing culture for clerics in society.

Priests needed to hear support from the public as well as from bishops, he said. "Being a priest today is following a lonely and unsettling furrow, but the vast majority of priests know that they have the human and spiritual resources to face those realities."

The Church also had to cope with the challenge of falling numbers in the priesthood.

The Church needed to open up a form of dialogue with communities rather than diktat, he added.

Asked whether the Church would be opposing any moves to legislate for same sex marriage and abortion, he replied: "We have to have a catechesis of engagement rather than simply a catechesis of telling people what they have to do. That is something that we are very slow at."

"The Church will teach its teaching about the complementarity of man and woman as being something that is essential to marriage. There can be other ways in which the rights of individuals and of people living in relationships can be healthily respected."

Archbishop Martin added: "The Church's teaching is to teach something rather than oppose it."

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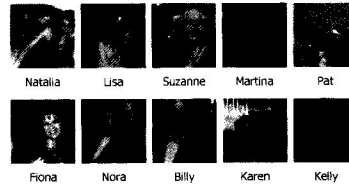
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