



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### Irish government inquiry uncovers over 100 allegations of sexual abuse by priests



Brian Lenihan, Irish government minister who presented the report to the Dublin Parliament.

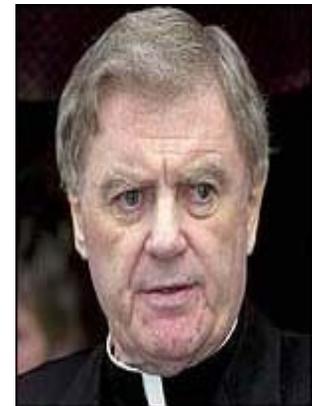
**An Irish government inquiry into child abuse in a County Wexford diocese has uncovered over 100 allegations of sexual abuse by priests. The 271-page Ferns report said the allegations were made against 21 priests who had been working in the diocese between 1966 and 2002.**

The report said police investigations into claims of abuse were inadequate. It also criticised bishops in the diocese for failing to take basic precautions to protect children. The two-year investigation into the allegations of abuse was chaired by retired supreme court judge Frank Murphy.

Six of the 21 priests have been named in the report but 15 others are identified by numbers as allegations against them have not been proven in the courts. It said that between 1960 and 1980, the then bishop of Ferns, Donal Herlihy, treated child sexual abuse in his diocese as an “exclusively moral problem”. Priests who were accused of abuse were transferred to a different post or different diocese for a time, but were later returned to their former position, the report found. A second senior clergyman, Bishop Brendan Comiskey, was also heavily criticised.

The report stated he had consistently failed to have priests step aside because he considered it unjust as allegations of abuse were not substantiated.

Speaking as the document was published, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern said immediate action would be taken to implement the recommendations contained in the dossier. “It is a catalogue of serial abuse and gross dereliction of duty in the diocese of Ferns,” he said. “I think it is shocking to everybody’s sense of how children should be protected. Our thoughts go out to the victims and their families. The report brings out the full horror of their situation ... and catalogues the continuing failure to respond adequately in Ferns until recent years.”



Bishop Brendan Comiskey