

NEWSLETTER

DIOCESAN CHILD SAFEGUARDING DAY

15 December 2013 is Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day.

The aim of Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day is to raise awareness in our parishes of the work that is being done to ensure the safety of children involved in Church activities in the Diocese. The key messages we wish to put across are:

- safeguarding is about creating the right environment for the involvement of children in the life of the Church
- safeguarding practice is an integral part of ministry.

15 December is one of the Sundays for the 'Do This in Memory' programme so that there will be lots of parents and children at Mass. It provides an excellent opportunity to talk directly to parents and provide reassurance for those of them who may have some misgivings about allowing their children to participate more actively in the Church by

becoming altar servers, joining children's choirs and so on.

Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day is an initiative of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, which was appointed by Archbishop Martin at the beginning of this year. The Committee, which is made up of priests, religious and lay people from parishes and diocesan agencies is developing and enhancing the safeguarding work that we do in the Diocese. A key objective for the Safeguarding Committee is to raise the profile of the work being done in this area.

Homily notes, prayers of the faithful and information about child safeguarding in the Diocese will be distributed to every parish in advance and it is hoped that the Safeguarding Representative in each parish will do a short presentation.

It is envisaged that Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day will become an annual event.

Further information will be sent to each parish nearer the day.

SUPPORTING PRIESTS WHO ARE OUT OF MINISTRY DUE TO CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

This item has been included in response to a request from a Parish Safeguarding Representative.

Gerry Deegan is the Diocesan Priest Support Coordinator and part of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service team. Gerry works mainly, but not exclusively, with priests who are out of ministry because complaints that they abused children have been made against them. Gerry provides these priests with support but he also has a supervisory and monitoring role. It is his responsibility to ensure that these priests comply with whatever restrictions have been placed on them.

Some priests may be asked to step down from ministry while a complaint of child abuse is under investigation. If it has been established that child sexual abuse has occurred, the priest is not permitted to minister in the Archdiocese of Dublin. If, on the other hand, it is established that abuse did not occur, the priest resumes ministry.

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION SERVICE

CSPS is 10 years old this year. There will be a Mass in the Pro Cathedral on Sunday 24 November at 3pm followed by refreshments in Clonliffe College to mark the occasion. This will be an opportunity to acknowledge and thank the many priests and lay people in our parishes and diocesan agencies for the work they have done to make the Archdiocese of Dublin a safe place for children.

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Some people argue that once an allegation of abuse against a priest has been substantiated, that priest should be laicised. They argue that the Diocese should not go on supporting a man who has abused his position of trust as a priest.

Laicisation can be an appropriate option for some priests in this position, particularly younger men who have a reasonable chance of making an alternative life for themselves. Older men, however, do not have a realistic chance of making a new life for themselves. They need ongoing support from the Diocese and it would be inhumane to cast them adrift. More than that, it would not be good child protection.

When a priest is found to have abused a child, he is made subject to a precept. This is canon law decree and it places restrictions on the priest on whom it is imposed.

Typically a priest who is under precept is not allowed to minister, to present himself as a priest or to be involved with children. It is Gerry's job to make sure these restrictions are observed. This minimises the risk that the priest will reoffend and thus enhances child protection.

Gerry provides support to priests out of ministry, as well as monitoring their compliance with the terms of their precept. He encourages them to live fulfilling lives and to make the best of their talents. Some of the men Gerry visits feel a deep sense of shame for what they have done. This can lead them to withdraw from social contacts. Gerry may be one of the few people with whom they have regular contact. Social isolation is a risk factor for reoffending so Gerry's supervision and support for these men helps to maintain the Diocese as a safer place for children.

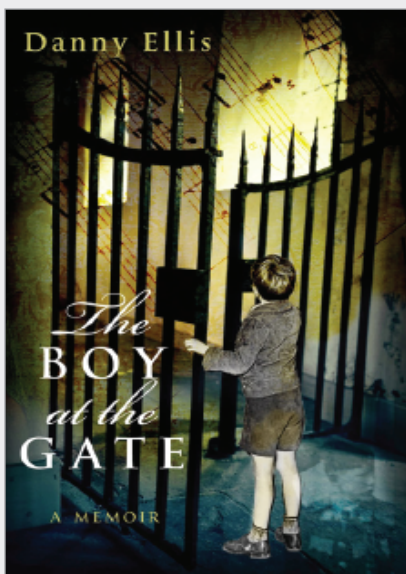
In our society the abuse of children is often seen as the worst

of all crimes. There is little sympathy for those who have abused and little concern for their welfare. The Church would not be the Church of Jesus Christ if it merely reflected and acted on these sentiments. Those priests who have abused children were made in the image and likeness of God and, no matter what they have done, they are our brothers in Christ. Pope Francis recently said that: "God is in every person's life".

It is the responsibility of the CSPS to take steps to ensure that those who have abused children do not have opportunities to reoffend. It is not for the CSPS to judge priests who have abused children, still less to punish them – those are matters for the civil and canonical authorities. Gerry's job title – Priest Support Coordinator – reflects the idea that children are often best protected by helping rather than rejecting those who have hurt them in the past.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Book Review: *The Boy at the Gate*
by Danny Ellis
Transworld Ireland, 2012



Danny Ellis spent his early childhood living in poverty in Dublin's Green Street with his mother, two sisters and, later, twin half brothers, referred to throughout this book as the Two Twins. Danny's father was working in the US. In his absence, Danny's mother had a relationship with another man, the father of the Two Twins. Their birth effectively marked the end of the relationship between Danny's parents. This precipitated a series of events that led to Danny spending eight years in Artane Industrial School. This book is the story of the events leading to his placement in Artane and his life there.

Rather like Angela's Ashes, the story is told from the perspective of

Danny Ellis when he was a child. In an epilogue, he adds his reflections as an adult looking back on his childhood experiences. The use of the child's voice to tell the story gives immediacy to the events as they unfold but one cannot help wondering whether anyone could possibly remember events from early childhood in such detail. Also, some of the language used is not that of a child. You should not let this put you off, however, because this is a terrific book.

Due to the fact that the story is told from a child's perspective, the reader has to fill in some of the pieces that were not known to the child (Danny) at the time. Danny's mother seems to have struggled as a young woman left alone to care

for small children. She was a gifted singer and liked to sing in pubs. Her drinking caused problems, not least that she left Danny, from a young age, to look after his younger sisters. This brought her to the attention of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The Two Twins and then Danny's sisters went into care. Meanwhile, Danny's mother was given a corporation house in Rathfarnham but, by this stage, her life was in free fall. She placed Danny in Artane, telling him that she would come back for him at Christmas. She did not. Later, she did visit but only to tell him that she was going into hospital and would bring him home after that. He never saw or heard from her again. Later he learned that she had gone to England.

During the time he was in Artane, Danny had some contact with his sisters. They met up in his uncle's house about once a month. However, the Two Twins disappeared from his life. In one heart breaking scene in the book, Danny, on the day that he is leaving Artane, discovers that two younger boys who were placed there some years after him and with whom he has had some contact without ever getting close or even particularly friendly are, in fact, the Two Twins, his half brothers. On making this discovery, Danny runs back into the school to find them. It is too late, however. There is no bond there. They have lived apart so long and the two boys are so emotionally unavailable that the discovery barely registers with them.

Much of the book is taken up with Danny's time in Artane. It is a harrowing story. Danny describes being beaten with the cane or the leather strap and witnessing others boys being beaten. The violence he describes is sometimes extreme. It is not just this that makes the story so awful; it is his description of the poor physical conditions, the lack of adequate food and clothing, but perhaps more than anything the lack of anything like an appropriate response to the trauma for the children of separation from their families and from their familiar worlds. Danny arrived in Artane and was pretty much left to get on with it. Even finding out the rules was something he had to learn from the other children.

There is a scrupulous honesty in the manner in which Danny Ellis tells the story. He acknowledges, for example, that, as a gifted musician and a member of the Artane Boys' Band, he was part of an elite within the school and his experiences were not as bad as those of other boys. The Brothers who ran the school are not described as though they were all the same. He clearly feels a debt to Brother Joseph O'Connor who was in charge of the Band (Danny subsequently made a career in music). Other Brothers are remembered for their kindness, including one saintly older Brother who taught him how to pray.

The heroes of this book are the children themselves and this is what makes the book worth reading. The story is not just one of survival. It is a story of resilience, camaraderie, 'divilment', and love -

the love the children showed in helping each other survive in a hostile and often brutal environment. Danny Ellis loved his mother too and, even though she abandoned him to a terrible childhood, he says at the end of the book that his deepest wish for her is that she found peace and happiness in her new life in England.

Not so very long ago, Sinead McDonnell and Andrew Fagan met with a woman who, over three hours, told a harrowing story of abuse she had suffered in childhood at the hands of a priest. Shortly afterwards, she made contact to apologise for burdening us with 'all that ugliness'. We answered truthfully that we had not been burdened by ugliness. We were, to be sure, saddened and shocked by some of the things that she told us. More powerful than that, however, was her own courage and resilience, her determination to make a good life for herself and for her children, despite all that she had suffered.

Danny Ellis writes at the very end of his book that: "in the long run, innocence prevails over corruption, whatever form it takes".



*Danny Ellis
Singer, Songwriter and Author.*

TOPICS FOR FORTHCOMING REPORTS

If there is a topic or issue that you would like to see discussed in forthcoming reports please email your suggestions to: andrew.fagan@dublindiocese.ie.