

Irish government releases 'damning' abuse report

by [Francis X. Rocca](#) in the [August 9, 2011](#) issue

A special commission sponsored by the Irish government criticized a bishop for failing to report allegations of clerical sexual abuse to police and noted "concerns" about the same bishop's own interactions with a teenage boy.

The commission's report, published on July 13, is based on a two-and-half-year investigation of the Diocese of Cloyne in the wake of sexual abuse allegations made against 19 priests between 1996 and 2009.

Investigators faulted the diocese for failing to inform police about 15 allegations of clerical sexual abuse, including two cases in which the alleged victims were still minors at the time the accusations were made.

Speaking before the Irish parliament July 13, Prime Minister Enda Kenny described the report as "damning."

The Cloyne inquiry is the fourth major probe by the Irish government into clerical sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic Church since 2003. The investigations have revealed widespread child abuse over several decades by clergy and members of religious orders and have led to the resignations of three bishops.

None of the previous investigations dealt with events as recent as those in the new report, which occurred after Irish church leaders established child protection policies in 1996. The report concludes that, in the case of Cloyne, those policies were "not fully or consistently implemented."

Bishop John Magee, who served as bishop of Cloyne during the entire period covered by the report, stepped down from active duty in March 2009 and resigned a year later. He publicly asked "forgiveness and pardon" for his failure to prevent sexual abuse.

During the investigation, the report said, "concerns were expressed about [Magee's] interaction with a 17-year-old boy" whom the bishop kissed and embraced, an experience that the teenager found "disquieting." But the report concluded that the incident was eventually handled correctly.

Prior to becoming bishop, Magee served as a private secretary to three popes: Paul VI, John Paul I and John Paul II.

The Vatican launched its own investigation of clerical sexual abuse in Ireland last November. It announced last month that the inquiry had finished its "first phase" but said that a published report of its findings might not appear until next year. —RNS