

Straight talking

with 'The Duke'

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Don't blame the messenger

It has been a terrible time for the Catholic Church here and it seems to be getting worse. Cardinal Sean Brady is now under pressure to resign over his handling of the Brendan Smith affair when he was a priest.

I don't know whether Cardinal Brady's resignation would be a good thing or not, but the whole thing is a very sorry mess. It is quite unbelievable to learn that some of the children abused were made to sign a vow of silence after they had been abused. The whole situation seems to be getting worse as the revelations continue. The credibility of the church is diminishing with every day that passes and it is very sad to see it.

I know that there are many very good people in the church but this scandal will not go away and it looks like it will get worse before it gets better. We hear now that even the Pope could be involved in the cover up. I am of the firm opinion that the vast majority of priests of a certain age were aware of the child abuse problem and either they helped with the cover up or they turned a blind eye to it all. The defence of Cardinal Brady that it was different times is a very weak one indeed.

The men who covered all this up were all highly educated people. Most have several degrees and several letters after their names and are highly

intelligent people. Had they not the cop on to realise that what was going on was wrong? Was there no one to stand up and shout stop? It shows just how powerful the church was.

Last week I heard Bishop Christy Jones ask the question why was the church being singled out in Ireland today? There is a very good reason why it is being singled out and it is simply because the people who have been convicted of child abuse and those who covered it up and aided and abetted it are the very people who stood on the altar Sunday after Sunday and told people how to live their lives.

There is no point blaming the media for all this. The church has let the

people down badly. I know many religious people who are horrified with what's going on and I can tell you from first hand knowledge that the church is losing followers by the day. People are so disillusioned with what is going on. As a parent it is very, very hard to tell young people that they should be going to Mass or following the teachings of the church. Those are the facts and it is the fault of the church and not the media.

I hear many say that maybe when it is all over there will be a leaner and better church. That may well be the case but it will be a very, very small church the way things are going. There was a time when Ireland was seen as a major

bastion of the Catholic Church. Last weekend in 30 cities across the USA there were vigils where people gathered to pray for the victims of child sexual abuse in Ireland! That is some change. The eyes of the world are on Ireland as this situation gets worse and worse.

I said it here several months ago that The Murphy Report should be extended to cover every diocese in the country. The whole situation has to be revealed in every diocese and only then can the church try and come to terms with what happened. The alternative is a drip drip of revelations that could go on for many decades into the future.

Facebook experiment

Last week I started a page on Facebook that the system here has failed the ordinary Irish person. It's just an experiment to see what the level of anger that us out there at what's going on in this country. It will be interesting to see what response there is. I'll keep an eye on it and give it a couple of months to see how it goes. Join if you feel the same way.



Olwyn Murray

Well done Olwyn

Well done to Olwyn Murray on her performance in the final of the All Ireland Talent Show. It was marvellous achievement to get into the last six and she is still very young at 16 years of age. She has a bright future in the entertainment business and if she is properly managed there is no reason why she cannot make a career out of her great voice.

Well done to the Roscommon Drama Festival Committee on another very successful festival which concluded last weekend. Attendances were good over the nine-night period and there were some excellent plays seen by the punters. It is brilliant that we have a venue in Roscommon at the Arts Centre to stage these festivals and it is fantastic too that amateur drama is still alive and well throughout the country.



Country burnt by the big freeze

One great thing about the past few weeks is that the weather has super altogether. However, I have never seen the countryside as brown or yellow looking as it is at the moment. We have had three months of freezing weather and there has been no growth whatsoever in recent weeks and months. It will be a late spring this year.

But it is great to see the sunshine and the calm weather in recent weeks and hopefully the weather will now warm up and growth will begin soon. After the terrible floods and the snow and ice during winter, let's hope for nice weather this year.

It lifts the spirits of everyone when the weather is good.

Mary Finn of Roscommon Drama Festival pictured presenting the award for Best Director in the Confined Section, which was sponsored by John Finn Electrical, to Andy Doyle and Marie Johnston from Kilmuckridge Drama Group at the Roscommon Drama Festival Awards night on Saturday. Pic: www.hursonphotography.com

Developers' proposal is bizarre

On The Frontline on Monday night I listened with incredulity to people from the Irish Property Council, a group that represents developers who have borrowed less than the five million euro amount that would mean that they would be covered by NAMA.

They want the government to give tax breaks so that the building industry can start again. It is the most bizarre suggestion that I have ever heard. These people are the very ones who have got us into the mess we are in. They were the people who

borrowed like there was no tomorrow and now they want to be bailed out just because they got it wrong. What about the rest of us that didn't go mad borrowing money, or the people who are now on the dole or short working weeks as a result of the collapse of the economy?

Yes the banks threw out money like it was confetti at a wedding, aided and abetted by Bertie Ahern and his friends in the Government who didn't do their jobs with regard to regulation and who couldn't see further than their greedy noses

into the future. I think that it's a scream to read that Bertie is receiving 40,000 dollars to speak at dinner dances in the USA. It's not a bad payout for someone who was largely responsible for ruining the country.

The people on The Frontline on Monday night were caught, simple as that. I agree with them, I think that it's terrible that the taxpayer has to bail out the banks, but we have to have a banking sector of some sort or the economy will collapse altogether. However, we cannot return to the days of hous-

ing estates shooting up in every town and village in the country with no one to live in them. The local councils have no money to provide services for these estates anyway. No thanks. It happened once and we don't want it again. If the Government want to rescue the building industry, let them start building schools, hospitals and other sustainable projects that will aid the economy. A grant scheme for people to make their homes energy efficient would also be a big employment creator too.



Bertie Ahern