



Bishop Miller commends film on mental health and teenage suicide

‘Unseen’ is about the devastating effect of suicide among young people. It can be used very powerfully in schools and youth groups and enable young people to talk about the issues concerning them.

Earlier this month, Bishop Harold Miller attended the Northern Ireland premier of the film which is produced by an organisation called ‘Christ in Youth’, and filmed in Ireland. It won the best short film prize at the Richard Harris Film Festival in October 2017, and was also a nominated finalist at the 2017 Galway Film Festival.

Bishop Miller said, “A few weeks ago, we heard the frightening statistic that more people had died by suicide in Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement than had died through terrorism during the entirety of the Troubles. That puts things in perspective. What a tragic loss of life, so often inexplicable and sudden.

“It also made me reflect on the fact that my own uncle died by suicide not long before I was born. In those days, it was rarely spoken of, but it left a sense of deep sadness in my mother, which I don’t think she ever entirely got over.

“My prayers are with all those who have suffered the collateral effect of the suicide of a loved one, who are left with unanswered and unanswerable questions, and with hurts so deep that they are unspoken.

“I hope ‘Unseen’ will enable us all to see what is a massive issue in all our communities, taking away the lives of so many people loved by God, and with a future which they cannot see, but which we grieve the loss of.

“We are left with the question, ‘What can we do to change this?’ This short film can be part of the answer.”

Unseen and some accompanying resources are now available to download for free. Visit the [*Unseen* website here](#).

The ‘[Get Help](#)’ section on the website also sign-posts professional organisations who work within the field of mental health and suicide.

The story

Unseen is a short film narrative about the relationship of a 17-year-old boy with his Grandfather who discovers him trying to take his own life by suicide. It later unfolds that the Grandfather's wife, the boy's Grandmother, had also died by suicide 17 years earlier, however, no one ever talks about it. Hence the boy and his Grandfather's mental health has gone *Unseen*.

Has Pope Francis just declared Dromore diocese as being unfit for purpose?

Dromore diocese, with just 20 parishes and fewer than 30 priests, is one of Ireland's smallest... so why then has Pope Francis just declared it as being unfit for purpose?

The arrival of retired cleric Dr Philip Boyce is aimed at restoring order after the resignation of Bishop John McAreavey over the Malachy Finnegan child abuse scandal - Martin O'Brien writes in the Belfast Telegraph (March 30 2018)

The fervent hope of the priests and lay faithful in the diocese of Dromore will be that yesterday's formal arrival of retired bishop Dr Philip Boyce to take temporary charge of the troubled diocese on the explicit orders of the Pope, and the celebration of the Mass of Chrism in Newry Cathedral, will bring some semblance of order after a month of confusion and disarray.



That said, few doubt that Dromore - one of the smallest dioceses in Ireland with just 22 parishes and fewer than 30 priests - remains in a state of crisis, maybe even an existential crisis. The crisis has been triggered by revelations about the sex crimes of a deceased priest who was also a diocesan college headmaster and how they were hushed up for decades, first by the late Bishop Francis Brooks and then by Bishop John McAreavey, who was forced to tender his resignation on March 2.

Well-placed sources in Dromore diocese told me this week that the viability of such a small diocese has been an issue in the background for many years in the context of the shortage of priests.

The Pope took just 24 days to accept the resignation of Bishop McAreavey. That is fast by Vatican standards.

There are four diocesan vacancies in Ireland because of "normal" resignations (when the bishop submits his resignation having reached 75) and, after up to four years, the bishops concerned are still waiting to be told to hand over the reins to new blood and take things easy. Spare a thought for John Kirby in Clonfert in Galway, who will be 80 in October.

But John McAreavey's resignation was far from normal. Just gone 69, he would have been expected to remain in charge until 2025.

Monday's announcement signifies that Rome concurs with the observation of one very senior local cleric who said: "Dromore is dysfunctional, it is in a mess."



The appointment of Dr Boyce (78. *Photo left*), former Bishop of Raphoe, as apostolic administrator (ie the Pope's own man to govern the diocese on a temporary basis) with virtually all the powers and duties of a diocesan bishop means that there is recognition in Rome at the highest level that the diocese of Dromore needs sorting after Dr McAreavey's sudden decision.

One well-informed Church source said: "That precipitate decision by Bishop McAreavey will not have pleased Rome. He jumped the gun." Others point out that Dr McAreavey had little option once he had lost the trust of so many of his flock. The clue to Pope Francis's recognition that Dromore diocese is in crisis and needs special attention comes in the notes for editors in the statement announcing the pontiff's decision, issued by the Catholic Communications Office in Maynooth. It said: "An apostolic administrator is appointed to temporarily govern a diocese when special, or serious, circumstances warrant such an appointment. He governs in the name of the Holy Father."

Those special circumstances are obvious. The diocese has been reeling since BBC Northern Ireland's Spotlight programme revealed details of the Fr Malachy Finnegan clerical sex abuse scandal six weeks ago, which eventually forced Dr McAreavey to write his resignation letter. Finnegan was spiritual director, teacher and then president of St Colman's College in Newry from 1967 to 1987, during which time he subjected some pupils to sexual and other abuse before his appointment as parish priest in Hilltown, where he sexually assaulted an altar boy over a five-year period. He died in 2002.

Last week one of the most important events in any diocesan calendar, the Chrism Mass, which normally takes place on Holy Thursday, was cancelled, sparking anger from some priests and laity. This is when the local bishop blesses the sacred oils that are used in sacraments such as baptism, confirmation and the anointing of the sick. But the Chrism Mass went ahead yesterday, celebrated by Bishop Boyce and diocesan priests.

The decision to impose an apostolic administrator means Rome has no confidence in a diocesan administrator, a local priest, who would normally be elected by senior local priests, the canons of the diocese, within eight days of the acceptance of a resignation and the formal declaration by the Pope that the See is vacant ('sede vacante' in Latin).

It also means that Canon Liam Stevenson, the vicar general who had taken over day-to-day running of the diocese at Dr McAreavey's request, also steps down from that role. Canon Stevenson taught under Finnegan in St Colman's. His failure in recent weeks to answer questions from the media about what he knew or didn't know about Finnegan's abuse has dismayed many in the diocese, according to sources.

One senior cleric said: "Rome was likely advised that virtually all those senior priests in the diocese who taught under Finnegan in St Colman's are, in a sense, compromised by the revelations. We need a new broom to lead Dromore."

It is also thought the Vatican wanted to be seen to get a grip on Dromore well before the Pope's Dublin visit in August.

Bishop Boyce is considered a surprise, even controversial, choice. His critics point out that he was criticised for his handling of a clerical sex abuse case in Raphoe by the National Board for the Safeguarding of Children in a report in 2011 (he apologised for his failings).

One retired priest, who worked in England for years and is now reportedly living in the Dromore diocese, told the Nolan Show that he was "disgusted" by the appointment. However, others say that Dr Boyce should be given a chance.

They point to "a safe pair of hands" who may reassure local priests and faithful that he will not do anything too radical, like recommending the dissolution of Dromore, one of the smallest dioceses in Ireland, and its transfer into the dioceses of Armagh and Down and Connor in roughly equal parts.

However, such a course cannot be ruled out and it may be significant that the Vatican did not explicitly say that Dr Boyce would hold the reins until a new bishop is appointed.

However, opponents of dissolution - and there will be many in the diocese - would see it as deeply unfair if the dissolution of the ancient diocese, which may happen some time in the future in any event, was forever linked to a clerical sex abuse scandal. One of Bishop Boyce's tasks will be to ensure that the diocese fully co-operates with the PSNI investigation that was announced earlier this week and any possible subsequent independent inquiry.

Bishop Boyce's appointment will, for now at least, help fill the vacuum following Dr McAreavey's departure.

But the spotlight will remain on Dromore - and hardly for the best of reasons - for some time to come.

Martin O'Brien is a journalist, communications consultant and award-winning former BBC producer

Archbishop of York facing police investigation over failure to report abuse

The archbishop of York and four other bishops are facing a police investigation for failing to report allegations of child sexual abuse, according to the [Times](#)



The Archbishop of York said the responsibility to report the abuse lay with Ineson's bishop at the time, Steven Croft.

Matthew Ineson, a former priest, says he was raped by Rev Trevor Devamanikkan at the age of 16 in

Bradford in the the 1980s.

A memo from June 2013, seen by Christian Today, reveals that John Sentamu received Ineson's allegation but recommended 'no action' be taken. Instead he replied to Ineson offering his prayers 'at this difficult time'. Devamanikkan went on to live in Witney, Oxfordshire, before eventually being charged with three counts of buggery and three counts of indecent assault last year. However he committed suicide the day before he was due in court in June last year.

The diocese of York insists that Sentamu did not fail to act on any disclosures because that responsibility lay with Ineson's local bishop, Steven Croft, who was at the time bishop of Sheffield.

However South Yorkshire Police are now working with the Crown Prosecution Service on the early stages of an investigation into Sentamu, Croft and three

[All Saints Parish Church, Antrim](#)



others bishops he told who also failed to pass the allegation on to the police, according to the [Times](#). The Church's national safeguarding team have already announced they will conduct an independent investigation into Ineson's treatment. A spokeswoman told the newspaper: 'The diocese of York insists that Sentamu did not fail to act on any disclosures because that responsibility lay with Ineson's local bishop, Steven Croft, who was at the time bishop of Sheffield.'

Last month a longer statement from the NST said his treatment 'has been taken very seriously since it came to our attention,' describing his abuse as 'harrowing'.

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