

# IRELAND LIES ABOUT THE HOLY SEE

Over the summer, Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny accused the Holy See of meddling in Irish affairs, citing the recently published Cloyne Report (an Irish government document on priestly sexual abuse in the Diocese of Cloyne) as evidence; he also said that attempts by the Holy See to “frustrate” the Irish inquiry occurred “as little as three years ago.”

All of this was a lie: there was no interference; the Cloyne Report never made such an accusation; and nothing has happened in the last three years to warrant these charges.

To be sure, there were points of contention between what the Irish government requested and what the Holy See thought judicious. At most, this constituted uncooperativeness; it is a lie to say it merits the accusation of “interference.” Also, anyone who can read knows that the Cloyne Report never even suggested that the Holy See sought to meddle in Irish affairs. Lastly, when Kenny was asked to provide evidence of attempts by the Holy See to “frustrate” the inquiry in the past three years, the best he could do was to assert that his remark was based on “anger and frustration.” So that gave him the right to lie about the Holy See?

The fact of the matter is that the Irish government lagged behind efforts by the Catholic Church to remedy sexual abuse, and the Holy See’s response to the Irish government made that clear. In 2008, the Church’s Elliott Report took the Diocese of Cloyne to task for not following the 1996 guidelines for sex abuse cases that were issued by the Irish Bishops. Indeed, while the Irish government was still debating what to do about mandatory reporting of these crimes, the Catholic Church already had its guidelines in place. Had Bishop John Magee followed them in Cloyne (and had he followed canon law),

things would have been different.

The Irish made much of a 1997 letter by the Apostolic Nuncio in Ireland seeming to weaken the 1996 guidelines, but the Holy See effectively rebutted that interpretation. Besides, only one clear case of abuse in Cloyne was recorded after the letter appeared.

The best analysis of this situation was made by Canadian priest Father Raymond de Souza. In his article on the website of First Things, Father de Souza said, "Mr. Kenny's speech was only secondarily about protecting children. It was primarily about the role of the Catholic Church in Irish society. It also sought to deflect attention from the failings of the Irish State. It was a hostile act, and the Holy See was right to respond firmly." He ended his article by stating that the frustration in Ireland is understandable, and that it would be "convenient if the whole stinking mess could be dropped in the lap of Rome." But that wouldn't make it right, he said.

In short, the Irish need to take a breath and hit the reset button before they get themselves in any deeper.