

## Church had 'immunity to hide abuse'

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The Catholic hierarchy in [Ireland](#) was granted immunity to cover up child sex abuse among paedophile priests in Dublin, a damning report has revealed.

Authorities enjoyed a cosy relationship with the Church and did not enforce the law as four archbishops, obsessed with secrecy and avoiding scandal, protected abusers and reputations at all costs.

Hundreds of crimes against defenceless children from the 1960s to the 1990s were not reported while gardai treated clergy as though they were above the law.

In a three-year inquiry, the Commission to Inquire into the Dublin Archdiocese uncovered a sickening tactic of "don't ask, don't tell" throughout the Church.

"The Commission has no doubt that clerical child sexual abuse was covered up by the Archdiocese of Dublin and other Church authorities," it said. "The structures and rules of the Catholic Church facilitated that cover-up. The State authorities facilitated that cover-up by not fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure that the law was applied equally to all and allowing the Church institutions to be beyond the reach of the normal law enforcement processes."

Four archbishops - John Charles McQuaid who died in 1973, Dermot Ryan who died in 1984, [Kevin McNamara](#) who died in 1987, and retired Cardinal Desmond Connell - did not hand over information on abusers.

The first files were handed over by the Cardinal in 1995 but even then he had records of complaints against at least 28 priests. The primary loyalty of bishops and archbishops is to the Church, the report said.

Bishop James Kavanagh, Bishop Dermot O'Mahony, Bishop Laurence Forristal, Bishop Donal Murray and disgraced Bishop Brendan Comiskey, a reformed alcoholic who failed to control paedophile priests when in charge of the Ferns Diocese, all knew about child abuse for many years.

The inquiry, headed by Judge Yvonne Murphy, said the hierarchy cannot claim they did not know that child sex abuse was a crime.

"The welfare of the children, which should have been the first priority, was not even a factor to be considered in the early days," the Commission said.

**Press Association**

**<http://www.independent.ie/national-news/church-had-immunity-to-hide-abuse-1954894.html>**