

From: Fr Brian Lucas [gensec@catholic.org.au]
Sent: Thursday, 31 May 2012 6:14 PM
To: John Usher
Subject: Farrell

ju

Dear John,

*FARRELL
(ARMIDALE PRIEST)*

This is from the Broken Rites Website

Rites Australia helps victims of church-related sex-abuse.

By a Broken Rites researcher

- *Article updated 17 February 2012 (KL has a version updated 4 June).*

This is a classic case-study in how the Catholic Church authorities in Australia harboured a priest, despite complaints about him being a danger to children.

In one parish of the Armidale diocese in northern New South Wales in the 1980s, altar boys complained that they were being sexually abused by a certain priest (let us call him **Father XYZ**). But the two leaders of this diocese — Bishop Henry **Kennedy** and Monsignor Frank **Ryan** — protected this priest, helping him to avoid a criminal conviction.

Privately, Father XYZ admitted that he had indeed been committing sexual acts upon children. Later the church was forced to begin paying compensation to some of these former altar boys.

The former altar boys said that their lives were damaged not only by the abuse but also by the church's cover-up and the code of silence.

REDACTED

Armidale diocese

Father XYZ grew up in Armidale and attended school there. When he was a young adult, he was recruited by Bishop Henry Kennedy to go to a New South Wales seminary to be trained for the priesthood.

After being ordained, Father XYZ belonged specifically to the Armidale diocese and normally he would be expected to spend his career in the parishes of this diocese.

The Armidale diocese comprised about 30 parishes in a vast rural area. The biggest town in the diocese is Tamworth. The town of Armidale is merely where the bishop is located — at the Cathedral of St Mary and St Joseph, Armidale. Tamworth and Armidale are prominently located on the New England Highway. Further inland are outlying towns such as Moree and Narrabri.

Bishop Henry Kennedy and Monsignor Frank Ryan were significant figures in the Australian church.

- **Bishop Henry Kennedy**, as a young priest, had been the private secretary to Cardinal Norman Gilroy in Sydney, and had eventually become vice-chancellor of the archdiocese of Sydney. After being an auxiliary bishop in Brisbane, he became bishop of the Armidale diocese in 1971, aged 56.

Australia's youngest monsignors (the rank immediately below a bishop). He became the Armidale diocese's vicar-general (that is, the bishop's deputy) throughout Bishop Kennedy's reign. As well as being vicar-general, Monsignor Frank Ryan simultaneously worked in parishes (for example, St Francis Xavier parish at **Moree**).

Early complaints

In the early 1980s Father XYZ spent three years working as an assistant priest in a rural parish. He gave much attention to the altar boys.

By early 1984, at least one family complained to the Armidale diocese leadership that Father XYZ had sexually abused their son ("**Max**" — not his real name), who was an altar boy. This complaint was "handled" internally by Bishop Kennedy and Monsignor Ryan and it was not passed on to the police.

The Armidale diocese leadership merely granted Father XYZ a short period of leave from the diocese. Later in 1984, they brought him back to the Armidale diocese, where they appointed him to a parish in a much larger town than his previous town. The families in his new parish were not told about the previous trouble in the rural parish.

Meanwhile, other boys from Father XYZ's earlier town (where the above-mentioned "Max" lived) revealed that they, too, had had an encounter with this priest. But, again, none of this information reached the police.

REDACTED

Police charges

REDACTED

Early on the evening of 11 August 1987, the arrest of Father XYZ was reported on the Tamworth local regional commercial television news bulletin. The news item gave the priest's full name, plus the charges. But, also on that same date, church lawyers obtained an injunction from a Supreme Court judge, preventing the next morning's newspaper from publishing the name of the defendant or any details. Thus, the newspapers could not mention the Catholic Church or the fact that "the man charged" was a clergyman. However, many people had already heard the priest's name on the earlier TV bulletin.

Court case

Supported by the church leadership, Father XYZ indicated that he would plead "not guilty". The church's legal team was well resourced. It was headed by a prominent Sydney Queen's Counsel, whose long career has included defending a number of high-profile criminal cases.

Father XYZ's case, held in a closed court on 18 February 1988, was heard by a Catholic magistrate who was personally acquainted with Father XYZ.

The magistrate imposed an order, prohibiting the media from publishing the priest's name, which is why this **Broken Rites** article refers to him as "Father XYZ".

After the court's acquittal, the Armidale diocese arranged for Father XYZ to live in a presbytery (the home of a very senior cleric), instead of ministering in a parish. Father XYZ spent this time doing some university studies.

Transfer

In 1989 it was arranged that Father XYZ would transfer to minister in a parish in the **Parramatta diocese** (in Sydney's west), although he still belonged officially to Armidale.

The Parramatta diocese, which comprised 60 parishes, was administered from 1986 to 1997 by Bishop Bede Heather.

As Parramatta is 500 kilometres away from Armidale, the Parramatta congregations were unlikely to have heard about the 1987 court case. The people of the Armidale diocese were not told why Father XYZ was not being given any more parishes in the Armidale diocese, and his new parishioners in the Parramatta diocese were not told why he was arriving there.

Father XYZ worked (during 1989 until late 1990) in one of Parramatta diocese's parishes and then (from late 1990 to early 1992) in a second parish. Again, he befriended boys in the same way as before. Eventually, some parishioners in the Parramatta diocese became concerned about Father XYZ.

One parent spoke to a prominent priest of the Parramatta diocese, **Father Roderick Bray** (of St Margaret Mary parish in **Merrylands**), and threatened to "go public" about Father XYZ. Furthermore, someone in the Parramatta diocese learned about Father XYZ's previous trouble in the Armidale diocese, and this information began to circulate in the Parramatta diocese.

In late 1991, while he was still on loan to the Parramatta diocese, the church authorities were finally forced to re-assess their previous protection of Father XYZ.

On 3 September 1991 (according to an official document in the possession of Broken Rites) Father XYZ was called to a meeting at the Sydney Cathedral presbytery, attended by three church officials:

- Reverend **Brian Lucas** (then based at the Sydney Cathedral), who was involved in the administration of the Sydney archdiocese.
- Reverend **John Usher**, of the Sydney archdiocese, chairperson of the Australian Catholic Welfare Commission.
- Reverend **Wayne Peters**, a senior priest of the Armidale diocese, whose responsibilities then included the Armidale diocese Tribunal (Peters later became Armidale's vicar-general).

Interviewed by the three officials, **Father XYZ admitted that he had been committing sexual acts on young boys in his parishes.**

[According to the New South Wales criminal laws, these offences would constitute the crime of indecent assault of a child.]

By mid-1992, Father XYZ's term in the Parramatta diocese had expired. He returned to the Armidale diocese, living in a private house (not a church-owned house). The church authorities did not strip him of his priesthood but they did not appoint him to minister in any more parishes. Thus he became plain "Mister" XYZ, instead of "Father" XYZ. Despite his record, the Armidale diocese allowed him to continue playing an active role (as a layman) in church affairs in this diocese.

Confidential settlements

Matthys later took over in Armidale.

After Father XYZ's return to civilian life, some of his former altar boys tackled the church authorities about the damage that had been done to their lives. The church resisted these applications but it eventually had to make confidential financial settlements with several of the former altar boys. The settlements served a business purpose — in order to end (and limit) the diocese's financial liability to each of these persons.

Broken Rites has obtained the details of three settlements regarding Father XYZ:

- **REDACTED**, the altar boy in the 1987 court case, hired a Sydney legal firm in the mid-1990s to bring the Armidale diocese to justice. **REDACTED** finally extracted a settlement from the diocese in 1998, when he was aged 26. He used this compensation as a deposit on a house for his partner and his two young children. But he was still feeling damaged by the church-abuse and the cover-up. At the end of 2000 his depression became particularly bad and he was feeling worn out. He was found unconscious in bed. He died on **REDACTED** 2001, aged 28, when his children were aged about nine and eight.
- **CPK** (born on **REDACTED** 1979) was an altar boy in the Parramatta diocese during Father XYZ's final months there in 1991-92. In October 2003 **CPK** (then aged 24) signed a 24-page statement, alleging multiple incidents of sexual abuse by Father XYZ. The church contested **CPK**'s claim for reparations. A settlement was reached in 2005 when **CPK** was 26. But **CPK** never recovered from the disruption of his adolescence and he took his own life, by hanging, on **REDACTED** 2007, aged 28. He was the father of two young children.
- "**Basil**" (not his real name), who had been an altar boy for Father XYZ in the same parish as **REDACTED**, won a settlement from the Armidale diocese in 2002 when he was 29. Before seeking this settlement, Basil had written to Cardinal George Pell (the archbishop of Sydney), complaining about Father XYZ and the church's cover-up. Pell replied that this was not a matter for the Sydney archdiocese. Pell forwarded Basil's complaint to the Armidale diocese. This indicates that Pell now knows about the Father XYZ cover-up — and so do other church leaders. |

Broken Rites has heard about a settlement to another complainant ("**Max**", in the Armidale diocese in the same parish as **REDACTED**). Also, there may have been other settlements that Broken Rites has not heard about.

The cover-up

The church authorities have some explaining to do:

WHY did the church tolerate Father XYZ for so long in the Armidale diocese in the 1980s, thereby putting children in danger?

WHY did the Armidale diocese transfer him to the Parramatta diocese for 1989-92, thereby putting more children in danger?

WHY did the Parramatta diocese agree to accept this priest, despite his history of complaints about him in the Armidale diocese?

WHEN Father XYZ admitted in his interview with church authorities on 3 September 1991 that he had indeed been committing sexual acts on children, did the church authorities pass this information on to the New South Wales police? If not, why not?

DO the church authorities feel any responsibility towards the children of **REDACTED** and the children of **CPK**? The lives of these orphans have been damaged by the church's behaviour in harbouring and protecting Father XYZ. The next generation is still feeling the impact of the church's cover-up.

Bishop Henry Kennedy and Monsignor Frank Ryan are mentioned in an article by **John Farrell**, of Armidale, which was published in a local newspaper, the *Armidale Independent*, on (10 February 2011 (on page 4). The article was headed:

Our history

A weekly history column by John Farrell

No. 85: The ten Catholic bishops of Armidale

John Farrell's article includes a brief outline of the career of Bishop Henry Kennedy, plus an anecdote about Kennedy's early travels in the remote parts of the diocese. The article also mentions that, after Bishop Kevin Manning retired in 1997, Monsignor Frank Ryan was the head of the diocese for two years until Bishop Luc Matthys arrived in 1999. John Farrell's article is favourable towards Kennedy and Ryan.

John Farrell, who is associated with the Armidale and District Historical Society, is a prominent citizen in the city of Armidale. He writes articles about local history in the Armidale press, including articles about church history.

According to the website of the Armidale Catholic diocese, **Father John Farrell** was a priest in the Armidale diocese in the 1980s (e.g., at St Nicholas's parish, Tamworth, in 1985).

Perhaps some day this same newspaper, the *Armidale Independent*, will publish an article about how the Catholic Church leadership harboured Father XYZ.

Fr Brian Lucas
General Secretary
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
G.P.O Box 368 Canberra ACT 2601

ph [REDACTED] f [REDACTED] m [REDACTED]

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>
