Jump or Get Pushed: After Murphy, Martin Declares War

During his year as coadjutor-archbishop of Dublin, it’s been said that Diarmuid Martin had a difficult time finding a lunchmate.

Waiting in the wings as Cardinal Desmond Connell’s successor, the longtime Vatican official might’ve been a native son of the Irish capital, but the Curia he’d soon inherit made its message clear: he wasn’t one of them.

Given what’s transpired since last month’s release of the Murphy Report — namely, the archbishop’s all-out denunciation of the chancery culture that facilitated the history of abuse and cover-up the state inquiry uncovered — that divide, never completely out of view, has come center stage in a seismic way.

Five years into his mandate, the 66 year-old prelate still largely finds himself a lone rider in the inquest’s wake, handling its fallout without the teams of lawyers and spinners who’ve come to embody ecclesial damage control elsewhere. Yet just a week after the Pope expressed his own “outrage, betrayal and shame” at a Vatican summit on the crisis, and hours after the primate’s public warning that “responsibility must be taken by all” archdiocesan leaders who failed to act as the “protection principle” endured, Ireland’s largest paper reports the aftermath’s wildest turn of events to date — either the four active prelates who helped oversee the Dublin church as it routinely shuffled accused clerics step forward with their resignations over Christmas... or Martin will grease the skids:

THE Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Diarmuid Martin will seek to have four bishops fired by the Vatican if they refuse to step down over the Murphy report into child sex abuse cases in Dublin....

Sources told the Irish Independent that if the bishops -- who say they did no wrong -- do not stand down voluntarily on the principle of collective responsibility, Archbishop Martin will petition the Congregation of Bishops in Rome to fire them.

Of the four current and former Dublin auxiliaries who’ve been targeted, while Bishop Jim Moriarty of Kildare and Leighlin, 73, is reportedly moving toward the plank, other prelates on the archbishop’s “hit list” have challenged their placement on it; Bishop Martin Drennan of Galway -- who, it should be noted, was not named in the report -- protested that his “integrity is being called into question” and termed the move “a spiral of revenge,” and longtime Dublin Auxiliary Bishop Eamonn Walsh viewed calls for his departure as an “injustice” unto himself, adding that the torrential media coverage in the report’s wake had served to “turn up the pain” of abuse survivors who, he said, “do
not know how to cope with all the publicity.”

Meanwhile, having tussled with his successor in court over the release of documents to the inquiry, a former spokesman of Connell’s slammed Martin for what the aide called a “catastrophic” approach of “reputations being shredded” and “communicating with people who are [his] auxiliaries through” Irish state television.

In his December appearance on RTE’s Prime Time, the archbishop called for “answers that people can accept and believe” from those indicated in the report, adding that he was “not satisfied” with the responses given to that point and, indeed, going so far as to publicly name the prelates from whom he demanded sufficient explanations.

Along the way, Martin’s push has received added, repeated height from a high-profile church commentator with ties to Pope Benedict: a retired professor of moral theology at Ireland’s national seminary, Fr Vincent Twomey -- a student of then-Pr Joseph Ratzinger at Regensburg -- likewise took to the media to back the resignation calls, warning that the embattled prelates’ continuance in office was “causing great scandal” in itself.

"The longer they dig their heels in and refuse to resign, the greater damage they are doing to the church,” Twomey said in a radio interview. “What was done to” the victims, he added, “is a crime that calls to God for vengeance.”

Calling for an “honest investigation” of the Isle’s Catholic culture -- which, he said, had produced a “sterile orthodoxy” at its highest levels -- Twomey likewise penned a lengthy op-ed for the Irish Times advocating “some other way of choosing suitable bishops, [one] which will involve some real participation by priests and laity.”

After last week’s first report-induced resignation -- Bishop Donal Murray’s departure from the helm of the diocese of Limerick -- Martin said in a statement that, amid the investigation’s findings of “serious difficulties of structure and communication” which resulted in further abuse, “accountability must be assumed... and radical reform is required in the archdiocese, not just in the area of child protection.”

"Priests and people of this diocese see that there can be no healing without radical change,” the Dublin prelate added. "Along with many others, I am committed to that change.”

Lastly, though, yesterday saw a different outpouring of emotion as Killegan Fr Jeremiah Roche was remembered as a "mighty, mighty man” at his funeral.

The 68 year-old St Patrick Missionary had spent most of his four-decade priesthood ministering in Kenya, where he was murdered last week during a robbery of his home.

SVILUPPO: In yet another fresh development, it’s emerged that the Irish government has ordered each of the country’s 26 dioceses to hand over a list of every allegation they’ve received in the last five years before 8 January.

Termed a “dragnet,” the “massive investigation” will be carried out by the state’s Health Service Executive in conjunction with the church’s National Board for Children.

While the Independent reported that the Dublin curia received 131 new claims of past misconduct even before the Murphy release, another 600 complaints are already under investigation by the authorities in the wake of May’s Ryan Report, which detailed a staggering history of abuse in residential schools entrusted to religious orders.

SVILUPPO 2: As of early Wednesday morning, the ground keeps shifting -- reports have begun swirling that Moriarty (who, a fortnight ago, said he “did nothing wrong” and didn’t feel “any grounds” to leave his post) was preparing to announce his resignation in the afternoon, and Drennan told a local radio program that, given his “guilt by association” with his Dublin confreres, “if there is a mass resignation
called for, yes, it could come to me resigning.”

An unscientific poll on a Galway newspaper’s website found that 72% of respondents sought the latter’s departure.

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