

Man pleads insanity over the killing of his parents

A PARANOID schizophrenic who believed he was sending his parents to heaven when he killed them has pleaded not guilty to murder by reason of insanity.

Prosecution counsel Denis Vaughan Buckley yesterday told the jury at the Central Criminal Court that they would hear from two psychiatrists who would both say the accused, Julian Cuddihy, was suffering from delusions at the time of the killings.

Defence barrister Brendan Grehan said his client admits killing his parents and accepts the facts to be outlined by gardai.

Mr Cuddihy, 44, is accused of murdering his mother Kathleen Cuddihy, 73, and his father James Cuddihy, 77, at their family home in Churchtown, Carndonagh, Co. Donegal, on October 22, 2014.

By Eoin Reynolds

Outlining the evidence that will be given by consultant psychiatrist Dr Damian Mohan on behalf of the defence, Mr Vaughan Buckley said the accused is a paranoid schizophrenic and believed his mother was telling him to kill her. He said he also had a grudge against his mother because she did not support his wish to join the IRA – a wish that was inspired by his delusions of persecution.

Mr Vaughan Buckley said consultant psychiatrist Dr Fiona Toal would also give evidence that the accused thought he was 'facilitating them to enter heaven' and that he heard his mother's voice in his head commanding him to do what he did.

Mr Vaughan Buckley added that

both doctors concluded that Mr Cuddihy's mental illness meant he could not stop himself from carrying out the killings.

Mr Vaughan Buckley also summarised the evidence that will be given by Detective Garda Bernard Mullins, who responded to a 999 call by the accused's brother, James Cuddihy Jr.

When Detective Garda Mullins arrived at the scene, he saw Mrs Cuddihy lying on the ground with a hole in the back of her head. He also found James Cuddihy Snr's body in a pool of blood with an axe and a pair of scissors nearby.

The jury heard State pathologist Professor Marie Cassidy concluded that both deceased had suffered multiple wounds and died from head trauma.

The trial continues today.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

A phone could bring the end of innocence

WHAT value can we put on a child's innocence? For me, there is nothing more beautiful

or consoling than that sparkle of purity which shines so luminously from the eyes of a child. It is what puts children in the same category as the angels.

As always, Christ captured it perfectly: 'See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in Heaven look upon the face of my heavenly Father.' Despise them not, for in them you have your redemption.

And yet, we live at a time when innocence is constantly under threat, when the most precious facet of our children is routinely corrupted. As one grandmother recently said to me: 'I don't envy you bringing up children nowadays.' That is because our culture no longer values virtue, innocence or that basic goodness which is the essence of each and every child.

Children's television is awash with images of violence, destruction and death. The simple beauty of Winnie the Pooh has long given way to 'cartoons' with a basic message that 'might is right'. How are children expected to be children when the world in which they live is so morally bankrupt?

I have incessantly worried about this since first becoming a parent in 2005. No matter how hard you try to protect your children, you simply cannot guard them against everything that lies beyond the hall door. In one instant, their innocence can be compromised forever.

Last week, our 11-year-old confided in his mother that, in the schoolyard, boys were openly discussing sexual scenes they had watched on their iPhones. I suppose we were lucky that his childhood lasted for so long. And even though I knew the day would come, I cannot tell you how dismayed I was when it finally arrived.

Now I am certainly not a novice when it comes to schoolyard antics. However, what I do not expect is for my children's innocence to be compromised by other children in possession of iPhones. Indeed, the question is: what on Earth are primary school children doing with unrestricted internet access on such state-of-the-art machines?

It is a sad fact of modern life that parents, at some stage, have to confront the phenomenon of pornography with their children. What I did not anticipate was being prematurely forced into doing so thanks to the seemingly lax standards of other parents. Surely they must realise their children are not physically, psychologically or emotionally mature enough for any of this?

As I have often written, parents are the last line of defence between our children and a world that no longer values childhood. That is why we

must take every precaution to protect them – even if that means denying them the latest gadgets and high-tech toys. For all it takes is one wrong move, one bad decision, and you have lost your child to a world that is both soulless and loveless.

What's more, parents not only have a duty to protect their own children, but they have the added obligation of safeguarding their children's friends. To give a young child a high-tech phone is to potentially expose him to a whole host of threats. It is also to risk the innocence and security of those with whom he pals around.

It is, in effect, to deny parents the right to inform their children about highly sensitive matters at a time of their own choosing. It is very easy to give a child a phone, but it is not so easy to undo the harm that such gadgets can so effortlessly cause. As it is, we and many other parents are now left trying to salvage whatever is left of our children's innocence.

Children grow up eventually. Sooner or later, they learn the hard truths about our world and the depths to which we very often sink. Surely, however, they are entitled to grow up in their own time and to enjoy those blessed years of tranquil innocence which constitutes their childhood?

I know, of course, that no right-thinking parents would intentionally harm their own or other people's children. However, parents today simply cannot afford to take their eye off the ball when it comes child safety. They must exercise due caution in everything, most especially technology.

You cannot put a price on a child's innocence, simply because it is the most valuable thing they possess. It gives them the space to see beauty and love, colour and light before they inevitably fade. It safeguards them against a world in which vice is now the new virtue.

AS parents, we have a moral responsibility to ensure that our children enjoy every second of that innocence. Their problems and difficulties will come, but we should ensure that they do so in their own time and not before time. In short: we should let children be children.

Thankfully, our son was incredulous that people would want to watch such stuff. The fact is, however, that he now knows about something which I wish he had been spared for a little while longer. That this happened because others are apparently oblivious to the dangers of allowing their children to carry iPhones means that we desperately need to have an open and frank discussion about parental responsibility in respect of technology.

Our little ones only have one shot at childhood. They have a fleeting moment in which to enjoy their innocence and see the world from the standpoint of the angels.

Instead of dragging them down to Earth, we should let them soar until, having seen the heavens, they will never desire to dwell in the dirt.

mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie

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