

Tánaiste's son gets €7.5k in €60k whiplash claim

A SON of Tánaiste Frances Fitzgerald has settled a €60,000 damages claim for whiplash-type injuries he suffered in a rear-ending accident two years ago.

Robert Fitzgerald, an accountant, had sued motorist Jane Taffee, whose address was given as the care/of AXA Insurance, Wolfe Tone House, Wolfe Tone Street, Dublin.

The amount of the settlement was not disclosed when the case came before the Circuit Civil Court but outside of court a spokesperson for Ms Taffee said the settlement had been for €7,500.

This is consistent with an order made by Circuit Court

By **Ray Managh**

president, Judge Raymond Groarke, for legal costs within the lower jurisdiction of the District Court. Barrister Frank Martin, counsel for Mr Fitzgerald, thanked Judge Groarke for the time, just under two hours, which the court had allowed to facilitate settlement talks with AXA's legal team.

Mr Martin, who appeared with Barry Healy & Company, Solicitors, North Circular Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7, told Judge Groarke the case could be struck out with an order for Mr Fitzgerald's legal costs on the District Court level.

The settlement figure was not

publicly stated in court.

Mr Fitzgerald had alleged that he suffered neck and shoulder injuries in a traffic accident near the centre of Dublin. He claimed that a vehicle driven and owned by Taffee had rear-ended another vehicle in which he had been a passenger on Lombard Street in 2015.

Mr Fitzgerald, who lives in Castleknock, Dublin 15, claimed his hobbies, which include tennis and golf, had been affected. In his claim he had sued for the full €60,000 jurisdiction of the Circuit Civil Court but settled for the much lesser sum following talks. He was not in court for the announcement.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

For all its faults the Church has also been a guiding light

THIS weekend, the Dooleys will celebrate yet another sacrament. This time, it's our middle son's First Holy Communion. As you read this, we are frantically trying to pull everything together before the big day.

As I see it, Holy Communion is a major milestone in a child's life. Under the guidance of their superb teachers, all 60 boys have been preparing for this moment since September. Each has a sense that it is much more than just a special day out.

And yet, we live in a country that seems to have had enough of the Catholic Church. The old order is crumbling as we embrace secular creeds and orthodoxies. It is as though the Church has become our tribal scapegoat, an institution we like to blame for all our faults and failings.

I do not dispute that the Church is primarily responsible for its own troubles.

The abject wickedness of those who preyed upon children, the heartlessness of those who tormented people in the name of Christ, is something that we cannot erase from our collective memory. It cannot and should never be denied, downplayed or excused, for those are grave sins which cry out to Heaven.

The Irish Church is mortally wounded from self-inflicted scars. It is a shell of its former self, a mere remnant of a once-dominant body. But even now, when it is on its knees, we appear incapable of looking upon it with mercy.

The clergy that remain active are horrified by the endless revelations of torture and abuse. Within the past year, I witnessed one priest weeping on the altar as he apologised for the actions of a former parish priest he never knew. His tears were for his congregation whom the abusive priest had deceived and betrayed.

Last week, I attended the funeral of a young man who was cruelly snatched away by cancer at the age of 31. The church was overflowing with young people in their 20s and 30s numb with grief. The priest, Fr Michael Simpson, stood with them in their sorrow, a fellow sufferer full of compassion. In birth, sickness and death, in those

moments of sacramental joy, the remnant rises up and offers a hand of love.

Gone are those who would abuse their sacred office. Gone are those who would conflate Christianity with cruelty. All that is left now are those who seek to heal, help and console.

Will we really be better off when it all dies and fades away forever? Many will cheer the prospect of no priests to serve their parishes. But it is only when that moment arrives that we shall finally see what it is that we have lost.

When there is no-one left to baptise our children, or to confer upon them the sacraments, what then? To whom shall we turn when there is no-one left to comfort the sick, the dying and forlorn? And who will come in the dark of night as our loved ones take leave of us for the last time?

Who will stand by us as we grieve and as we mourn? Who will sanctify and bury our dead? And when, as it will, our turn comes, who will hold our hand and guide us across the threshold?

SUCH is the gentle work of mercy which the Church, for all its manifest faults, does in silence. As we sleep at night, the old and infirm are given hope. Those in their last agony are being anointed and consoled with a silent presence that speaks much more than words.

In a society so riven by pain, there are few enough sources of hope and peace. But even now, bloodied and bruised as it is, the Church continues to provide such peace.

Even now, as it endures daily doses of humiliation and shame, it continues to give joy to little children like mine, who, in their First Communion, experience the true meaning of community.

And so, on Saturday, we shall put on our best and head to the old church once again. It is 200 years old, a place of quaint beauty which has seen the best and worst of times. Today, it is served by a man, Fr Aquinas Duffy, who spends much of his time helping families whose loved ones have gone missing.

That is the work of compassion and love upon which the Church was founded. We should care for it, for who knows when we ourselves may need its helping hand?

—mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie—

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