

# At funeral, Irish cardinal says paramilitaries were trying to play God

ARMAGH, Northern Ireland - Cardinal Sean Brady of Armagh, celebrating the funeral for a man who "disappeared" more than 30 years ago, said the paramilitaries suspected of murdering and secretly burying him were trying to play God.

However, the cardinal also asked mourners to pray for the killers as Gerry Evans was finally laid to rest.

Cardinal Brady spoke Dec. 4 at Evans' funeral Mass in County Armagh. Evans was 24 when he went missing and is believed to have been abducted, murdered and secretly buried by members of the Provisional IRA, a splinter group of the Irish Republican Army.

The remains of Evans - one of the so-called "disappeared" - were recovered in October by a special investigative commission working on a tip from suspected former members of the IRA. No reason has ever been put forward for his murder.

Cardinal Brady said "there is a great sense of relief that, at last, the waiting has come to an end."

"At first that waiting was filled with hope - the hope that Gerry was still alive and would, one day, turn up safe and sound. But then, as the years rolled by, one kind of hope was replaced by another - the hope that his remains would be found and identified so that the mourning could begin and the burial take place, and proper respect be paid to his memory and prayers be offered for his eternal rest and happiness," he said.

The cardinal spoke of his anger "at the thought that we live in a society where certain people took upon themselves to play God. What arrogance. What appalling wickedness."

However, he also said: “We pray for those who killed Gerry. We are moved to do so because we believe in Christ’s victory over sin.”

Sixteen people “disappeared” during the course of the 30-year civil conflict between Northern Ireland and Britain. In 1999, the IRA admitted to killing nine of the 16 and gave information on the location of the bodies, but only three bodies were recovered. Since then, five more victims have been found – one in 2003, one in 2008 and three in 2010. Another man, Eugene Simons, was recovered in 1984 before the current campaign for recovery.