

# REVELATION



'Walkley award-winning journalist Sarah Ferguson has delivered some of the best TV journalism this country has ever witnessed but Revelation might just be the pinnacle.'

- Holly Byrnes, Daily Telegraph

'A searing documentary series.'

- Bridget McManus, The Age

'Extraordinary.'

- Andrew Hornery, Sydney Morning Herald



Sydney Morning Herald



Critics Choice, The Age



Pick of the Week, TV Week

'Astounding television.'

- TV Blackbox

'Hauntingly poetic...compelling, harrowing television.'

- Graeme Blundell, The Australian

'It's taken me until now to get over watching this extraordinary, devastating series. Brace yourself to watch it but watch it you should.'

- Laura Tingle, Australian Financial Review

## SYNOPSIS

In a world television first, Revelation takes cameras into the criminal trials of two notorious Catholic priests accused of sex crimes against children.

Through a series of extraordinary interviews films during the trials, Revelation uncovers the secret lives and motivations of some of the most reviled men of modern times.

How does a man of God become a predator of children? What dark psychology enables a priest to go from administering the sacraments to sexually assaulting an altar boy?

Revelation culminates in the Vatican with the story of a high ranking Cardinal accused of abusing boys in an orphanage in Australia.

Across three compelling episodes Revelation presents the deepest portrayal of the culture and system that protected perpetrators of heinous crimes against children.



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# KEY CREDITS

Presenter Sarah Ferguson  
Producer Nial Fulton  
Writer Tony Jones

Directors Nial Fulton  
Sarah Ferguson

Cinematographer Aaron Smith  
Editors Philippa Rowlands ASE  
Lile Judickas

Composer Helena Czajka

Legal Sandy Dawson SC

Archive Producer Michelle Bourkeris  
Graphic Designer Deb McNamara

Colourist Billy Wychgel  
Sound Designer Cate Cahill

Executive Producers Nial Fulton  
Ivan O'Mahoney

Principal Production and  
Development Investment **STATEMENT**  
Screen Australia

Financed with the  
assistance of Screen New South Wales

Developed and Produced in  
Association with The Australian Broadcasting  
Corporation

Production In Films



## PRESENTER SARAH FERGUSON

Presenter Sarah Ferguson is one of Australia's most acclaimed investigative journalists and documentary makers. A gifted story-teller, Ferguson's work is recognised for her courage, originality and uncompromising search for the truth.

Her films have had a profound impact on Australian society.

For over ten years, Sarah was a reporter and presenter at *Four Corners*, one of the world's leading documentary current affairs programs. She is also recognised as a highly skilled interviewer, always pushing the boundaries of human experience captured on camera.

Sarah has worked across a broad range of subjects, including a three-part series on the operations of an international people smuggling syndicate, cruelty for profit in the animal trade, sexual harassment in sport, powerful observational films on child poverty, homelessness and sexual abuse of children in remote indigenous communities.

Her three-part series on domestic violence in 2015 broke new ground, bringing cameras into women's refuges and magistrate courts. In the same year, Sarah produced Australia's most acclaimed political documentary, *The Killing Season*, a three-part series on the country's political leadership turmoil.

Over the course of a stellar career, Sarah has been awarded Australia's prestigious Walkley Award for journalism five times and her film *A Bloody Business* won the Gold Walkley. She has also received six Logie Awards, two AACTA awards and wrote an award winning book on the making of *The Killing Season*.

A close-up, high-angle portrait of an elderly man with a serious, intense expression. He has light-colored eyes and visible wrinkles on his face. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his skin and the intensity of his gaze. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

## EPISODE 1 THE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN USED BY THE DEVIL

One of the Catholic Church's first paedophile priests to be convicted anywhere in the world, Father Vincent Ryan faces new criminal charges.

Revelation follows Ryan to court and in a world television first, films the trial of a clerical child abuser as Ryan's victims search desperately for justice.

In a shocking interview on the eve of trial, Sarah Ferguson confronts Ryan about his double life and prolific offending. Ryan reveals how he used confession and the brotherhood of the clergy to conceal his crimes.

Marked out by his superiors as a future prince of the church, Ryan was sent to study in Rome. Ordained by the Pope in St Peter's Basilica, Ryan describes how the Church instructed him to believe he was untouchable.

Police open their files of the original investigation of Ryan, revealing how the notorious priest was moved from parish to parish, sexually abusing children in every location.

Ryan's defence is challenged by his victims who describe the terror and shame he inflicted on them.

The episode's stunning conclusion reveals that despite multiple convictions and decades as a paedophile, Vincent Ryan is still a Catholic priest.



**'THE EVIDENCE WILL BE THAT THE ACCUSED IN HIS POSITION AS THE LOCAL CATHOLIC PRIEST HAS SEXUALLY ABUSED 35 BOYS OVER A PERIOD OF ABOUT 20 YEARS.'**

- David Patch, Crown Prosecutor

## EPISODE 2

# A DANGEROUS PLACE TO BE A CHILD

A beachside city on the stunning New South Wales coast, Newcastle has one of the highest concentrations of child abusers of any Catholic diocese in the world. The trial of local priest Vincent Ryan continues, revealing the system responsible for the cover-up of his crimes.

Ryan's former house-keeper, 93-year-old Audrey, describes the night her son Andrew hanged himself. His abuser arrived at the house in a desperate bid to cover his tracks, looking for Andrew's suicide note.

As the trial for Father Ryan reaches its verdict, another Catholic sex abuse case gets underway. Bernard McGrath, a religious brother from the Order of St John of God, terrified his victims in a residential boarding school where he was headmaster.

During the trial Sarah Ferguson goes into the maximum-security prison to interview McGrath. Bernard McGrath is one of the world's most prolific paedophiles and the first member of his secretive global order to break ranks.

In a tense exchange, McGrath names the individuals who enabled his abuse of children over decades, moving him from New Zealand to Australia and to the United States.

McGrath's prison confession leads Sarah to senior Church official Father Brian Lucas, one of the architects of the Church cover-up of child abuse.

The episode ends with the shocking revelation that the Brothers responsible for moving McGrath are still under the protection of the Pope.



**'WE JUST LIVED IN HELL.  
WE CONTROLLED BY  
FEAR. WE CONTROLLED  
THOSE KIDS BY  
ABSOLUTE FEAR.'**

- Bernard McGrath

## EPISODE 3 GOLIATH

The unmissable final chapter transports you to the centre of power in the global Catholic Church.

Cardinal George Pell was one of the Pope's closest advisors and a divisive figure in Australia.

Bernie breaks decades of silence saying Pell groomed and abused him in the Ballarat orphanage where he grew up, in a swimming pool and in the presbytery of the Catholic cathedral in the 1970's.

Bernie had kept his secret hidden for decades, intimidated by Pell's growing power and authority in the church.

An investigation unfolds in the remote parishes of the vast outback of Victoria, searching for evidence of Bernie and Pell's parallel histories. Former residents of the orphanage come forward, some with their own stories of abuse.

Ballarat priests talk bluntly about the institutional cover-up of paedophilia in their church.

Steve Blacker tells how the cover-up put him in harm's way as a nine-year-old boy. His parish priest, a known and notorious child abuser, raped him in the confessional.

Steve brings a civil case against the church which results in a landmark decision for victims of clerical abuse.

Bernie has the final word, asking for the shame he and other victims have carried for decades to be taken away.





**'IT'S NOT MY SHAME  
ANYMORE, GEORGE  
HAVE IT, GEORGE IT'S  
YOURS, DEAL WITH IT.  
I'M GOING TO WAKE  
UP TOMORROW AND  
I'M THE BERNIE I  
WANT TO BE MATE.  
YOU HAVE THE SHAME.  
I DON'T WANT IT  
ANYMORE.'**

- Bernie

## MAKING REVELATION

Sarah Ferguson spends her working life tackling confronting stories but none has tested her like Revelation, a three-part series on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, in which she comes face to face with some of Australia's most notorious serial paedophiles.

"Throughout the long-running scandal of clerical abuse in Australia, there was one voice we hadn't heard, that of the perpetrators. I wanted to ask them how they led their double lives and how the church enabled them, but how do you interview men whose crimes are so vile and disturbing?"

"It was a struggle not to let my revulsion at their crimes drag me off course."

One of the interviews was conducted behind bars in a maximum-security prison where Bernard McGrath, a former brother from the Order of St John of God and headmaster in residential schools in Australia and New Zealand, is serving 39 years for crimes against children.

"A prison warden brought McGrath into a secure room where we'd set up the cameras. He tried immediately to draw me into a whispered private conversation," recalls Ferguson.

"I was prepared for this because his lawyer had warned that he would try to manipulate me. I moved back on my stool, making him lean towards me, shifting the power balance. I was apprehensive, not because of who he was but because of the professional challenge of drawing him out."

Ferguson interviewed Vincent Ryan, a priest of the Maitland-Newcastle diocese on the eve of his trial. Ryan had already spent 14 years in prison and was facing new charges from men who had been altar boys in his church in the 1970s and 1980s.

"The interview went for hours across two days," says Ferguson.

"Ryan looked at me at one point and said whatever I thought of him, he was sure of God's forgiveness. I am not easily offended because it obscures critical thinking, but this outraged me. Not because it wasn't possible according to his faith but because he had not earned it."





"He was so far from understanding the effect of his crimes that he was nowhere near forgiveness.

These were difficult interviews because as individuals they've spent many years practised in deception, both deceiving themselves and other people."

"So even though they have been convicted, they don't want to talk about what they did except on their own terms and there is still a strong sense of solidarity towards the church.

"They told me more than they intended. After the interviews I was physically and mentally drained."

Throughout filming, Ferguson was conscious of the confronting nature of the material and its potential impact on the audience.

"There is a risk in putting criminals like this on camera, the material has to justify the affront. You have to be very conscious of what the effect will be on the viewer of hearing and watching a paedophile priest talking about his life, that's right on the edge.

"But the moment of seeing the person themselves, the person who actually perpetrated these crimes, in their ordinariness, it is a revelation.

"This is this ultimate double life, they are standing up in church on Sunday preaching about morals and committing heinous acts before and after, sometimes immediately before and immediately after.

How is someone capable of leading a life like that?"

Identifying suitable cases of accused men willing to take part in Revelation and navigating the legal hurdles to get cameras into court were enormous tasks.

"Finding priests or brothers willing to have their trial filmed was extremely difficult," says Ferguson. "This is a new frontier, filming sexual assault trials."

"We had the support of the Chief Judge of the NSW District Court and the Chief Judge of the County Court in Victoria who, to their immense credit, got the arguments about bringing these cases into the public domain.



"The Director of Public Prosecutions in NSW and Victoria and three trial judges were all crucial parts of the process, along with barristers and solicitors. These are heavily protected cases.

"There is great concern in the system to protect the victims of child sexual abuse going to court, there are individuals you can't identify but we found a way to tell the stories."

Over her career Ferguson has witnessed and reported on dreadful things, mass death from the Boxing Day tsunami, the suffering of abused women and children escaping domestic violence and forced marriage and the exploitation of the global people smuggling trade.

All have left a mark, but none like Revelation.

"The experience of making this series has scored deep lines of empathy and understanding in me, of the crime, of the complicity of a powerful, self-serving institution and above all the ruinous consequences of child abuse on an innocent being who is ripped from childhood in that moment," she says.

"I've spent my professional life understanding power and trying to give succour to the weak when abused by power but nothing before this had taken me so far into human selfishness and suffering."



## KEY CREATIVES



### SARAH FERGUSON

PRESENTER, DIRECTOR

Sarah is one of Australia's most respected and successful investigative journalists and film-makers. Her exemplary and courageous work has secured her reputation, along with her increasing global profile, built on hard-hitting interviews with international figures. Sarah has received multiple journalistic and film-making awards, including the Gold Walkley, six Logies and AACTA awards for Best Documentary.



### NIAL FULTON

PRODUCER, DIRECTOR

Nial is an award winning producer of internationally recognised films. His work on investigative documentaries is ground-breaking, putting cameras where access has never before been granted, as seen in the critically acclaimed US series Borderland and award-winning series on domestic violence, Hitting Home. Nial has received many awards, including AACTA and Walkley awards for documentary.



### TONY JONES

WRITER

With decades of experience as a political journalist, writer, executive producer and presenter, Tony Jones is one of Australia's most respected media personalities. Tony has covered seminal news events of the last two decades, from the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, through the collapse of apartheid in South Africa to the rise of the Taliban. Tony co-created and presented Q&A, Australia's leading news panel program. He has received multiple awards for his work, including six Walkleys.

## **REVELATION**

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An **IN FILMS** production

### **Production Contact**

Producer - Nial Fulton

**IN FILMS**

+61 400 707 176

[nial@in-films.com](mailto:nial@in-films.com)

