

Witness Name: SR 283

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922-1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SR 283 RGS

Respondent Witness Statement to Statement of HIA 203
HIA 203

I SR 283 will say as follows:-

1. I make this Statement in response to the above named Applicant's Statement to the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse 1922-1995 (the Inquiry).
2. The Applicant refers to having been resident in "Good Shepherd Belfast". The institution at that time was referred to as "St Mary's, Belfast". To avoid confusion, I refer to it as "St Mary's" in this Statement.

I will say as follows:

3. My name is SR 283 I was previously known as my name in religion which was SR 283 but we moved away from using names in religion and I am now known as SR 283
4. I was born on [REDACTED] I joined the Good Shepherd Sisters and made my final vows in 1957.
5. I undertook the household management and domestic science course in St Catherine's College, Sion Hill, Blackrock, County Dublin which I completed in 1955. I am a qualified Nurse and a qualified Midwife. I completed my Nursing Training in October 1960 and in November 1960 was assigned to our Convent in Belfast. I was involved in various ministries in the complex in Belfast.
6. I arrived in Belfast in November 1960. It is my recollection that Mother SR 300 SR 300 was in charge in Belfast when I arrived. I remember that Mother SR 300 went to Derry in 1963. It is my recollection that SR 302 was the superioress in Belfast after 1963.

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7. For my first 18 months I worked in the children's home which was called "Sacred Heart Home". **SR 303** worked with the children before I arrived. Sacred Heart Home took children between the ages of 2 years to 16 years. When I was there, I was mother to a lovely little group of around 13 or 14 children. The two youngest girls were sisters, and were around 7 years old. The eldest girls were also sisters, and they were approximately 13 or 14 years old. We liked to keep siblings together as they were a great support and comfort to each other. I recall that period as being the most lovely 18 months of my life. I endeavoured to treat the children as a good mother would have.
8. In the mornings, I got the children up and dressed, and made sure they had their breakfast. They were all out to school at 9:30am. Then I cleaned the place up, and made sure the place was tidy. I did all the children's laundry, sewing and mending. Sometimes I would do some dress-making for them. I prepared the evening meal. I had to have everything ready for when they came home from school. When they came home from school, I had a snack ready for them which would keep them going until dinner time. Then they had their dinner in the evening. Another Sister came over from the Convent to relieve me for meals and prayer time. Other than that, I was single-handedly being a mother to 14 children. I loved it so much.
9. The youth club was not there at the time – it came in much later. In the evenings, I would help the children with their homework, and we would chat.
10. I remember my two Christmases during that 18 month period (Christmas 1960, and Christmas 1961) with great fondness. When I was a child, my mother bought me a tartan skirt and a red jumper for Christmas. I brought each of the children the same, and they wore it as their special Christmas outfit. We all sat around the fire at Christmas time. We were a family.
11. The Sacred Heart Home building was a beautiful red brick building. I understand that it was the original Convent. Some of the older children (the teenagers) had bedrooms of their own. The younger children were between two bedrooms with 4 beds each. I slept on the same floor as the children, so make sure they were safe at night. I would get up in the night if a child needed me.
12. It is my recollection that all the children placed in Sacred Heart Home were brought to us by social workers, or by the police, or sent to us by the Courts. I do not remember meeting social workers. Perhaps social workers did come to visit, but I cannot remember. It is my recollection that there were no formal arrangements.

13. It is my recollection that the Sacred Heart Home closed in or around 1962. Upon its closure, I went to work in the laundry in St Mary's. I was assigned to work in the Ironing room of the Laundry department.
14. In the laundry, the Sisters worked together with the ladies. I remember that there were around 30 women working in the ironing room. In the ironing room, there were large rollers for sheets and tablecloths. There were two shirt machines which would press the sleeves, and then the shirt would be passed on for the rest of it to be ironed by hand. I do not remember if we had a radio, but there was a lot of noise from the machinery, so I do not know whether we would have heard the music over the noise. I have no recollection of saying the rosary. I do not remember any praying in St Mary's Belfast as was the practice in Limerick. I got on well with the ladies I worked with. We chatted and engaged in a friendly manner. I encouraged them and if they needed help I helped them. I can remember that sometimes a girl would go on the huff, particularly if another lady had said something to her that offended her or hurt her feelings. Sometimes a lady would walk out and leave. They called it "*going on the ran*". I do not remember it happening often. If a lady went "*on the ran*", I would go out to find her. Usually she would be sitting beside the laundry door in a huff. I would talk to her, find out what had happened, and try to resolve the issue.
15. From the early- to mid-1960s onwards, there was a change in attitude and a more progressive way of approaching our mission as Sisters. We became more focusing on getting the ladies out into independent living arrangements, encouraging them to advance their education to obtain jobs. Many of the Sisters were trained social workers, and there was greater emphasis put on independent living and developing skills so that they would be self-sufficient and independent. The whole ethos was to move away from institutionalised arrangements. Those ladies that were capable of taking up independent employment, were encouraged and supported in doing so. There were ladies who could not keep down a job for a multitude of complex reasons, and sometimes those ladies ended up back with us if a job placement had broken down. We tried again, and never gave up on them.
16. In response to the Applicant's Statement I would like to say the following:-
- (i) I was not in St Mary's at the same time as the Applicant – I left St Mary's in Belfast in 1963, and went to Derry.
 - (ii) I note from the records that the Applicant arrived in St Mary's Belfast in September 1964 and stayed for 5 weeks.

(iii) In relation to paragraph (3) (GSC-2002) the Applicant's recollection of the St Mary's timetable is not the same as my recollection. I would like to set out my recollection of the daily time-table. My recollection of the structure of the day was as follows:

- We started in the ironing room at around 9am. We had dinner at around 12noon, then returned to work at around 1:30pm.
- We stopped for an afternoon tea break, and then worked until either 5:30pm or 6pm.
- The ladies received their evening meal around 6 p.m.
- For the Sisters, there was evening prayer at 6pm, and then the evening meal was served at 7pm.
- In the evenings, I worked in the Mother and Baby Home. As stated above, I was a qualified nurse and midwife. The Mother and Baby Home was referred to as "Marianville". [REDACTED] was in charge of Marianville at that time, before [REDACTED] SR 304 arrived. I loved working in the Mother and Baby Home.
- The ladies had their own recreation hall. In the evenings, they played games, knitted, embroidered, and chatted.
- Everyone retired to bed before 10 p.m.

2. Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true

Signed:

SR 283

Dated the 3rd day of FEBRUARY 2016

Witness Name: **SR 283**

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922-1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **SR 283** RGSRespondent Witness Statement to Statement of **HIA 387** HIA ref
387**SR 283** will say as follows:-

1. I make this Statement in response to the above named Applicant's Statement to the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse 1922-1995 (the Inquiry).
2. The Applicant refers to having been resident in "Good Shepherd Belfast". The institution at that time was referred to as "St Mary's, Belfast". To avoid confusion, I refer to it as "St Mary's" in this Statement.

I will say as follows:

3. My name is **SR 283** I was previously known as my name in religion which was **SR 283** but we moved away from using names in religion and I am now known as **SR 283**
4. I was born on [REDACTED] I joined the Good Shepherd Sisters and made my final vows in 1957.
5. I undertook the household management and domestic science course in St Catherine's College, Sion Hill, Blackrock, County Dublin which I completed in 1955. I am a qualified Nurse and a qualified Midwife. I completed my Nursing Training in October 1960 and in November 1960 was assigned to our Convent in Belfast. I was involved in various ministries in the complex in Belfast.
6. I arrived in Belfast in November 1960. It is my recollection that Mother **SR 300** **SR 300** was in charge in Belfast when I arrived. I remember that Mother **SR 300** went to Derry in 1963. It is my recollection that **SR 302** was the superioress in Belfast after 1963.

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Applicant

HIA 387

HIA ref 387

7. For my first 18 months I worked in the children's home which was called "Sacred Heart Home". **SR 303** worked with the children before I arrived. Sacred Heart Home took children between the ages of 2 years to 16 years. When I was there, I was mother to a lovely little group of around 13 or 14 children. The two youngest girls were sisters, and were around 7 years old. The eldest girls were also sisters, and they were approximately 13 or 14 years old. We liked to keep siblings together as they were a great support and comfort to each other. I recall that period as being the most lovely 18 months of my life. I endeavoured to treat the children as a good mother would have.
8. It is my recollection that the Sacred Heart Home closed in or around 1962. Upon its closure, I went to work in the laundry in St Mary's. I was assigned to work in the Ironing room of the Laundry department.
9. In the laundry, the Sisters worked together with the ladies. I remember that there were around 30 women working in the ironing room. In the ironing room, there were large rollers for sheets and tablecloths. There were two shirt machines which would press the sleeves, and then the shirt would be passed on for the rest of it to be ironed by hand. I do not remember if we had a radio, but there was a lot of noise from the machinery, so I do not know whether we would have heard the music over the noise. I have no recollection of saying the rosary. I do not remember any praying in St Mary's Belfast as was the practice in Limerick. I got on well with the ladies I worked with. We chatted and engaged in a friendly manner. I encouraged them and if they needed help I helped them. I can remember that sometimes a girl would go on the huff, particularly if another lady had said something to her that offended her or hurt her feelings. Sometimes a lady would walk out and leave. They called it "*going on the ran*". I do not remember it happening often. If a lady went "*on the ran*", I would go out to find her. Usually she would be sitting beside the laundry door in a huff. I would talk to her, find out what had happened, and try to resolve the issue.
10. In relation to paragraph (21) (GSC-074) the Applicant's recollection of work in the laundry in St Mary's Belfast is not the same as my recollection. I would like to set out my recollection of the daily time-table. My recollection of the structure of the day was as follows:
 - i. We started in the ironing room at around 9am. We had dinner at around 12noon, then returned to work at around 1:30pm.
 - ii. We stopped for an afternoon tea break, and then worked until either 5:30pm or 6pm.

- iii. The ladies received their evening meal around 6 p.m.
 - iv. For the Sisters, there was evening prayer at 6pm, and then the evening meal was served at 7pm.
 - v. The ladies had their own recreation hall. They played games, knitted, embroidered, and chatted. Everyone retired to bed before 10 p.m.
11. From the early- to mid-1960s onwards, there was a change in attitude and a more progressive way of approaching our mission as Sisters. We became more focusing on getting the ladies out into independent living arrangements, encouraging them to advance their education to obtain jobs. Many of the Sisters were trained social workers, and there was greater emphasis put on independent living and developing skills so that they would be self-sufficient and independent. The whole ethos was to move away from institutionalised arrangements. Those ladies that were capable of taking up independent employment, were encouraged and supported in doing so. There were ladies who could not keep down a job for a multitude of complex reasons, and sometimes those ladies ended up back with us if a job placement had broken down. We tried again, and never gave up on them.
12. I left St Mary's Belfast in December 1963 to go to Derry. I was broken hearted to leave Belfast.
13. In response to the Applicant's Statement I would like to say the following:-
- (i) I do not remember the Applicant. I believe we would have been in St Mary's Belfast at the same time.
 - (ii) I note from the Applicant's records that she arrived in St Mary's Belfast on 9th June 1962 and stayed until September 1963.
 - (iii) I was in St Mary's Belfast from 1962 and left in or around December 1963.
 - (iv) At paragraph 20 (GSC-074) when recounting her time at Nazareth House, the Applicant makes a most serious allegation. The Applicant states that she was raped by a priest. The Applicant then states that she disclosed the rape to a nun. This is also discussed at paragraphs 22 and 23 (GSC-075) which relate to the Applicant's time in St Mary's Belfast. It is not clear when this incident occurred, or whether the Applicant made the disclosure to a Good Shepherd Sister, or a Nazareth Sister. The disclosure was not made to me, and I do not remember anything of this nature being discussed while I was there in St Mary's Belfast. The Good Shepherd Sisters have sought an assurance from the Inquiry that the Inquiry has passed all relevant information to the civil authorities so that the allegation can be fully investigated.

14. Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true

Signed:

SR 283

Dated the 3rd day of February 2016.

Witness Name: **SR 283**

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922-1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **SR 283** RGS

Respondent Witness Statement to Statements of **HIA 107** (HIA ref.107) and **HIA 211** HIA Ref 211.

I **SR 283** will say as follows:-

1. I make this Statement in response to the above named Applicant's Statement to the inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse 1922-1995 (the Inquiry).
2. I refer to the Statements made by **HIA 107** (HIA ref.107) and **HIA 211** HIA Ref 211.
3. The Applicants refer to having been resident in "Good Shepherd Derry". The formal name of the institution was St. Mary's, Derry. To avoid confusion, I refer to the institution as "St. Mary's" in this Statement.

I will say as follows:

4. My name is **SR 283** I was previously known as my name in religion which was **SR 283** but we moved away from using names in religion and I am now known as **SR 283**
5. I was born on [REDACTED] I joined the Good Shepherd Sisters and made my final vows in 1957.
6. I undertook the household management and domestic science course in St Catherine's College, Sion Hill, Blackrock, County Dublin which I completed in 1955. I am a qualified Nurse and a qualified Midwife. I completed my Nursing Training in October 1960. In November 1960 was assigned to our Convent in Belfast. I was involved in various ministries in the complex in Belfast.
7. I was transferred to our Convent in Derry in December 1963 as Mother **SR 300** the Superior there, had special medical and dietary requirements. It was my responsibility

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to ensure that the food prepared for her was suitable. I understood her condition, and I could cook appropriately for her.

8. I worked in the convent kitchen with **SR 309**. My duties were entirely devoted to the kitchen. I did not work in the laundry. At that time, **SR 291** and **SR 310** cooked for the ladies of St Mary's Derry. They worked all day preparing the meals for the ladies.
9. I note that the Applicants complained about the food they received (Applicant **HIA 211** **HIA 211** paragraph (5) GSC-046 refers to it as being "alright but tasteless" and Applicant **HIA 107** paragraph (14) GSC-041 refers to it as being "like slop"). I do not recall hearing any concern about the food that **SR 291** and **SR 310** prepared. It would have been simple, but nutritious and healthy.
10. I recall that St Mary's Derry was a very relaxed place. Derry did not have the long tradition and history that Belfast had. The Sisters and the ladies appeared to enjoy a warm and easy relationship.
11. **SR 311** became Superioress of St Mary's Derry in or around February 1964, and **SR 300** became the Province Leader. **SR 311** was a great woman, she was very mature and progressive in her views. I was in St Mary's Derry for 9 months and left in or around September 1964.

12. Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true

Signed:

SR 283

Dated the 3rd day of February 2016



Map showing Good Shepherd Belfast