

Witness Name: [REDACTED] SR 294

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922-1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] SR 294
[REDACTED] SR 294 RGS

Respondent Witness Statement to the Statement of [REDACTED] HIA 211 (HIA Ref 211)

[REDACTED] SR 294

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 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.

Personal Details.

3. I was born on the [REDACTED] I joined the Good Shepherd Sisters and made my final vows on 2nd December 1968.
4. I took the name in religion as [REDACTED] SR 294. In or around the 1970s, we phased out using "names in religion" and I reverted to my secular name, [REDACTED] SR 294. I am now known as [REDACTED] SR 294.
5. Before I entered the Good Shepherd Sisters, I worked in an accounts department. As a Good Shepherd Sister I qualified in Social Science in U.C.D. 1968-70. In 1977 - 1978, I undertook a post-graduate degree in the University of Leicester and obtained the CQSW/Diploma in Social Work.
6. I worked in St Mary's Derry from the October 1970 to September 1977 (1977 - 1978 I was undertaking social work studies as referred to above). There was a teenage unit within St. Mary's I understand this may have operated from 1969 to 1973. Sr. [REDACTED] SR 49 and I worked in the teenage unit in St Mary's. We worked with approximately six to eight teenagers (within the age range of 12 years to 18 years).

7. I do recall the Applicant and I know her quite well. I met her most recently on the 16th January 2016 when she attended at the funeral of one of the past residents of St. Mary's, Derry.
8. In response to the Applicant's Statement I would like to say the following:-
- (i) At paragraph 2 (GSC-001) the Applicant alleges that the residents had to wear a uniform every day. That is not correct. None of the ladies ever wore a uniform, unless of course it was the uniform of the school they were attending. Ladies working in the laundry were given an apron or an overall to protect their clothes, but none of the ladies wore a uniform. At the time there would have been a number of distinct groups within the Good Shepherd Sisters at the time, and perhaps the Applicant is recalling the clothing worn by those groups. There would have been the fully professed Sisters, a number of novice Sisters and there would also have been auxiliaries. The auxiliaries were not nuns. They did not take the same vows as Sisters, and would have made a series of commitments to the religious life. The auxiliaries would have undertaken forms of religious formation. In some cases, auxiliaries were sometimes former residents who wished to continue working with the Good Shepherd Sisters. Auxiliaries wore a blue smock. The Sisters would have worn a habit. After Vatican II (1962-1965), not all Sisters wore a habit, but some continued to wear a veil. As a professed Sister when I arrived in St Mary's Derry in 1970, I would have worn a habit.
 - (ii) At paragraph 2 (GSC-045) the Applicant says that her name was changed from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]. That is true. Ladies were given another name to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality. We did not refer to people using their surnames, we only used Christian names. This was to ensure that an individual could maintain their privacy. Northern Ireland was a very small place, and everyone knew everyone's business. So it was important that where possible, a lady could maintain her privacy and know that her private affairs were kept confidential. I remember that being really important at the time.
 - (iii) At paragraph 3 (GSC-0046), the Applicant says she did various jobs in the laundry during her time in St Mary's. I too worked in the Laundry from 1973 to 1977. I worked in the packing room of the Laundry in the morning and from 1974 in the afternoon I worked in a local housing estate in Derry as a social worker. In the evenings, I worked as a youth worker for the local Parish, and assisted in running the Parish youth club.

- (iv) As the Applicant has referred to the daily routine (paragraph 3 GSC-046, paragraph 5 GSC-046 and GSC-003), I would like to set out for the Inquiry a typical day in St. Mary's:
- a. The ladies would have been woken at approximately 7.00a.m. There was mass at 7.30a.m.
 - b. Breakfast would have been at approximately 8.15a.m. They were served porridge or cereal, and could have bread and butter.
 - c. Work in the laundry began at 9 o'clock. The Sisters worked alongside the ladies in the laundry. I worked in the packing room along with other Sisters and ladies. Work stopped for a tea break at 11 o'clock.
 - d. Lunch was at 12.30p.m. At that time, SR 49 was the cook. She was a qualified cook able to provide nourishing meals.
 - e. After lunch, I went to my social work job on the housing estate, and the ladies took recreation time. The others went back to the laundry at 1.30 p.m. and worked until around 5.30pm.
 - f. I worked as a social worker from 1.30 pm until 5.00 p.m. In the evenings, I was a youth worker in the local Parish, and I assisted in running the Parish youth club.
 - g. Before my time in St. Mary's in the early 1950's [REDACTED], a girl who lived locally was a great musician, she taught the girls and encouraged them. I remember hearing that [REDACTED] used to come in and help prepare them for operettas.
- (v) In her statement, the Applicant refers to a lady called GSC 6 GSC 6 was there when I was in St Mary's. She had been a long-time resident of St Mary's. When I read the Applicant's statement, I was not surprised to read that she told on the other girls if they did not get out of bed when she called them.
- (vi) In various points in her statement, the Applicant refers to being struck or slapped by SR 312 I was very surprised to read this. I never saw SR 312 strike or hit or slap anyone. I did not see any other Sister strike or hit or slap a lady. That was not the way we did things SR 312 was undoubtedly firm and strict, but I do not believe she would have struck a lady or a child.
- (vii) At paragraph 6 (GSC-047) the Applicant says "we were not allowed books". That surprised me. I do not remember any ban on books, and I would have been surprised if they had been refused a book.

- (viii) At paragraph 7 (GSC-047), the Applicant refers to a system of being "black booked" if you were naughty. I understand that the black book was used as a discipline system at some period but could not state what years it was used.
- (ix) The Applicant refers to **GSC 7** at paragraph 8 (GSC-048). **GSC 7** had a very strong social justice role in Derry and did great work for local people campaigning for social housing. However, I must state that I do not recall him ever having a role in St. Mary's or in the Convent. **SND 61** was the Chaplain at the relevant time. **SND 61** lived on **[REDACTED]** and was semi-retired at that time. He came up to say Mass each morning for the Sisters and the ladies. I find it shocking to believe that **SND 61** or indeed any priest would have broken the seal of confessional in the way that the Applicant alleges at paragraph 8 (GSC-047/GSC-048). I do not think that could be correct.
- (x) The Applicant is correct when she states that the ladies were not allowed out at night to go to dances (paragraph 11 (GSC-048)). Save where ladies went to evening classes in the local Technological College, or went out to other lessons, I do not think anyone was allowed out of St Mary's late at night. The civil rights protests in Derry (1968) had meant that there was civil and political turmoil all over the city. I remember them as being pretty scary times. A responsible parent would not have let their child out at night either during those times. The Convent was located beside a working class protestant housing estate called Irish Street. The Convent was a conspicuously Catholic establishment, and we felt particularly vulnerable. We were therefore especially aware of the political and social situation. When I arrived in Derry (1970) the Troubles had just started (1969). I recall the atmosphere in Derry at the 70's being uncertain and dangerous – there were all sorts of frightening issues, bomb threats, terrorist shootings, internment, hunger strikes. Bloody Sunday took place in the Bogside area of Derry in 1972. That was less than 2 miles from us in the Convent. It left us all tense and fearful of what might happen. We felt we could not let the children and ladies out at night to go to dances, as they were dangerous times in Derry and we were afraid what would happen if they were out late. In addition, some of our children and ladies had come from particularly distressing backgrounds. Some also had special needs or learning disabilities. Given that context, we considered them to be particularly vulnerable persons requiring additional safeguards. I remember the British Army patrolling the Convent grounds. You could not go out in the gardens when that was happening. We were afraid of what might happen to one of our ladies if even the merest rumour got around that she was going out with a soldier.

There were plenty of cases which were reported in the news in the early 1970s in Derry where girls were being "tared and feathered" for going out with a British soldier. The girls were tied to a lamppost by local sectarian groups, and tared and feathered as a form of public shaming. It was horrendous. The images of those poor girls terrified us. It was a brutal time in Northern Ireland. We were doing our best to ensure that our ladies were not left in a situation of danger. I agree that it may well have been a bit boring to be left in a room watching TV rather than going to a dance, but it is important to understand that we felt we were doing our best to protect them given the context of the times. To ensure that the ladies were not bored, and had plenty of entertainment we would often host musicals and concerts for them. I hope that the Applicant has some happy memories of those times.

- (xi) At paragraph 12, (GSC-048) the Applicant refers to being locked in the "*home part of the laundry so [they] could not get out*". This is not correct. The front door of the St Mary's building was locked each night to prevent intruders entering. You could open it from the inside, but from the outside you would have needed a key to open it. No one was ever locked inside so that they could not get out.
- (xii) At paragraph 13 (GSC-048) the Applicant refers to picking potatoes. As Sr. **SR 49** had stated in her Statement this would have been an annual event in October/November each year. I recall it being done for over one or two Saturdays in a year. There was a machine for digging out the potatoes. As well as the machine, there were farm hands – men who worked on the farm. I think the men would have been digging the potatoes up with their shovels. Then the Sisters and the ladies would have gone around scooping the potatoes up and putting them into a bag or a basket. I would have been ashamed to be inside when others were outside picking potatoes, so I helped with the picking too. I recall other Sisters picking potatoes too, those that were physically fit to do so.
- (xiii) In paragraph 17 (GSC-049) the Applicant says that "*the rest of us were not taught anything*". It is sad to read this allegation. In the early 70's I was one of the Sisters involved in giving educational lessons to the teenagers. At that time, the Education (Northern Ireland) Act 1947 had come into force. Section 33 (which had been commenced in 1957) stipulated that the school-going age was from 5 years to 15 years. I note that the Applicant came to St Mary's in April 1963 when she was 17 years and **■** months old. Perhaps for that reason, she was not sent to school. Children of school-going age would have been out to school during the day. If any particular resident was only going to be in St Mary's for a short time,

and we were unable to enrol her in a local school during her time, then myself and a number of other Sisters would have taken her for lessons. [REDACTED]

who was home from the Missions for a while took the ladies for lessons, as did Sr

SR 312

I took the teenagers for lessons in English, Arithmetic, Geography and typing skills. In the evenings, some of the ladies went to the local Technological College to do night classes. The desire to learn, and undertake continuing education would have been encouraged by Sisters. In performing our ministries, the Good Shepherd Sisters refer to a book of sayings handed down by the congregation's foundress, St. Mary Euphrasia. We call it the book of Conferences. In the Conferences, Sisters are advised (at page 158):

"One important recommendation with regard to our orphans, preservation children and others, is to give them regularly lessons in reading, writing, arithmetic and so on. If they are well taught and know how to work well, they will be able not only to earn their own living but also to help their parents".

It is a source of great sadness that the Applicant feels that we could have done more for her. She was with us from 1963 and I see from her statement that the Good Shepherd Sisters moved her and another friend in to a flat in 1972/1973 to transition them into independent living. This was to nurture independence and self-sufficiency for them.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed:

SR 294

Dated the 3rd day of February 2016

Witness Name: **SR 294**

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922-1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **SR 294**
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Respondent Witness Statement to the Statement of
HIA 202 HIA ref 202

HIA 202

SR 294

will say as follows:-

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Personal Details.

1. I was born on the [REDACTED] I joined the Good Shepherd Sisters and made my final vows on 2nd December 1968.
2. I took the name in religion as **SR 294** In or around the 1970s, we phased out using "names in religion" and I reverted to my secular name, **SR 294** I am now known as **SR 294**
3. Before I entered the Good Shepherd Sisters, I worked in an accounts department. As a Good Shepherd Sister, I qualified in Social Science in UCD 1968 – 1970. In 1977 - 1978, I undertook further studies in the University of Leicester and obtained the CQSW Diploma.
4. I worked in St Mary's Derry from October 1970 to September 1977 (in 1977 – 1978 I was undertaking social work studies as referred to above). After I completed my studies in 1978, I returned to St Mary's Derry and remained there until 1983.

5. There was a teenage unit within St. Mary's. I understand this may have operated from 1969 to 1973. **SR 49** and I worked in the teenage unit in St Mary's. We worked with approximately six to eight teenagers (within the age range of 12 years to 18 years).
6. I do not recall the Applicant.
7. In response to the Applicant's Statement I would like to say the following:-
8. I read with surprise and shock the allegation contained at paragraph 13 (GSC-055) the Applicant alleges that she was slapped across the face by **SR 49** "in front of everyone". I cannot believe that this happened. I never saw **SR 49** slap or strike or hit anyone. I worked with **SR 49** and I know her well. I cannot believe **SR 49** would strike anyone; it is totally against her nature.
9. As the Applicant has referred to the daily routine (paragraph 3 GSC-046, paragraph 5 GSC-046 and GSC-003), I would like to set out for the Inquiry a typical day in St. Mary's:
 - a. The ladies would have been woken at approximately 7.00a.m. There was Mass at 7.30a.m.
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 - g. Before my time in St Mary's, in the early 1950s, a local girl called **SR 49** who was a great musician, came in to St Mary's to teach the girls music. She encouraged them. I remember hearing that **SR 49** used to come in and help prepare the ladies to perform operettas.
10. At paragraph (12) GSC-055 the Applicant states that there was "constant religion force on [her]". There were times for prayer and the ladies went to Mass some

weekdays and always on a Sunday. It is to be accepted that we are a religious congregation, and our faith is important to us.

11. The Applicant is correct when she states that the ladies were allowed to go out in Derry (paragraph 11 GSC-055). They were allowed to go down to the town centre to the shops, and spend their pocket money. Ladies also went to evening classes in the local Technological College, or went out to other lessons. However, I do not think anyone was allowed out of St Mary's late at night. Save where ladies went to evening classes in the local Technological College, or went out to other lessons, I do not think anyone was allowed out of St Mary's late at night. The civil rights protests in Derry (1968) had meant that there was civil and political turmoil all over the city. I remember them as being pretty scary times. A responsible parent would not have let their child out at night either during those times. The Convent was located beside a working class Protestant housing estate called Irish Street. The Convent was a conspicuously Catholic establishment, and we felt particularly vulnerable. We were therefore especially aware of the political and social situation. When I arrived in Derry (1970) the Troubles had just started (1969). I recall the atmosphere in Derry in the 1970s as being uncertain and dangerous – there were all sorts of frightening issues, bomb threats, terrorist shootings, internment, hunger strikes. Bloody Sunday took place in the Bogside area of Derry in 1972. That was less than 2 miles from us in St Mary's. It left us all tense and fearful of what might happen. We felt we could not let the children and ladies out at night to go to dances, as they were dangerous times in Derry and we were afraid what would happen if they were out late. In addition, some of our children and ladies had come from particularly distressing backgrounds. Some also had special needs or learning disabilities. Given that context, we considered them to be particularly vulnerable persons requiring additional safeguards. I remember the British Army patrolling the Good Shepherd Convent grounds. You could not go out in the gardens when that was happening. We were afraid of what might happen to one of our ladies if even the merest rumour got around that she was going out with a soldier. There were plenty of cases which were reported in the news in the early 1970s in Derry where girls were being "tared and feathered" for going out with a British soldier. The girls were tied to a lamppost by local sectarian groups, and tared and feathered as a form of public shaming. It was horrendous. The images of those poor girls terrified us. It was a brutal time in Northern Ireland. We were doing our best to ensure that our ladies were not left in a situation of danger. I agree that it may well have been a bit boring to be left in a

room watching TV rather than going to a dance, but it is important to understand that we felt we were doing our best to protect them given the context of the times. To ensure that the ladies were not bored, and had plenty of entertainment, we would often host musicals, and concerts. I hope that the Applicant has some happy memories of those times.

12. It is very sad that the Applicant does not recall her time in St Mary's Derry as a happy time.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed:

SR 294

Dated the 3rd day of February 2016