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HIA REF: 27

Witness Name: HIA 27

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THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 27

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I, HIA 27 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born HIA 27 on [REDACTED] I was the youngest of three girls. My elder sisters were called HIA 55 and [REDACTED] HIA 55 was born on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was born on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] proper name was [REDACTED] We lived on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] My mother and father were separated. My mother had renal problems and was in and out of hospital and had numerous operations. When my mother became unable to look after us and was in hospital my father got Cannon McNelis, the parish priest, to put us in to care.

Nazareth House, Belfast ([REDACTED])

2. I was placed in Nazareth House, Belfast on [REDACTED] when I was six years old along with my two sisters. I remember being taken to a big room with my sisters and the nuns came and took us away one at a time. I did not see my sisters again while we were in care as I was in the nursery initially and then when I moved to the older girls' part we were all in different groups.
3. I was initially taken to the nursery part of Nazareth House. I do not have any memories of the nursery. My memories are of the bigger dormitory where I went

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when I was older. I remember the dormitory was always cold. We did not have enough blankets.

4. I remember the nuns inspecting our beds in the morning to check if anyone had wet their bed. I would have wet the bed often and I remember quickly learning to cover up if I had wet the bed to avoid being beaten by one of the nuns. I would have been wrapped in the wet sheet and hit all over. Other girls in my dormitory would have wet the bed and been punished in the same way.
5. I remember being bathed in a bath of scalding hot water with Jeyes Fluid and carbolic soap in it by older girls who scrubbed us with a big scrubbing. A nun would have supervised. We would have been red raw by the time we got out of the bath.
6. I cannot remember any of the nuns' names. I remember two were kind and the others were not. I remember being hit all over with a belt by the nuns. They would have hit you for lots of reasons for example talking back or not doing your chores properly. I remember having to scrub the floors until you could see your face on them. If we did not scrub them properly we would get beaten. We had to work in the laundry. We were treated like slaves a lot of the time.
7. Our daily routine was to get up in the morning and make our beds. We then had a very meagre breakfast of sloppy porridge. We had chores to do and then we went to school. Our education was very poor as priority was always given to religion and chores. After school we had more chores and then we had dinner which again would have been very minimal and we were always hungry. When we were hungry we used to go and lift scraps out of the bins outside. I only remember getting outside to play sometimes. We were not dressed properly. We were never called by our names. We all had a number. We had no real opportunity to make friends in the home as the nuns did not like us talking to each other.
8. I do not remember having any visitors. My mother was unable to visit as she was unwell. I was never taken out by a family at any time. I remember at

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Christmas time we considered ourselves lucky to get jam on our bread and an apple and an orange.

9. I never remember any inspections of the home by more senior members of the order. The nuns did not seem to have to answer to anybody. I never remember seeing a doctor the whole time I was in Nazareth House.
10. My sisters and I were returned home to our mother on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1950. We were all like strangers and it took us a long time to bond again. It was difficult to adjust to the outside world again after being in the prison that was Nazareth House.

#### Life After Care

11. When we returned home I attended The [REDACTED] school in [REDACTED]. My mother was still in and out of hospital but my older sisters were able to look after me.
12. I left school when I was fourteen. I worked for [REDACTED] for a few years. I then moved to [REDACTED] England with my sister [REDACTED] and my mother to live near my other sister HIA 55 who had already moved over there. I have lived in [REDACTED] for fifty six years. My mother was still in and out of hospital and died when she was sixty seven. [REDACTED] and I worked in a mill. I then went to work for [REDACTED] who were an electronics manufacturer and I worked there for thirty four years. HIA 55 still lives in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] passed away in 1996.
13. I have only seen my father once since he placed me in care. When I was twenty one I got in contact with him. He was still living in [REDACTED]. I wanted him to give me answers about why I was placed in care but he wouldn't give me any answers. I never saw him again.
14. I met my husband when I was eighteen years old. We were married until he died in 2010. We had four children, three boys and a girl, and eight grandchildren. My daughter was killed in a car crash when she was seventeen. I never told my

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husband about my time in care because I was ashamed. I only told my three surviving children six months ago. I felt that I had to keep everything to the back of my mind for my own sanity. My time in care has left me feeling different from everyone and unable to trust people. I found it difficult to learn how to love.

15. I believe that the Sisters of Nazareth and the Roman Catholic Church should apologise and pay compensation to us for the childhood we suffered under their care. I also think there should be a memorial for those who were in care and died before they got a chance to come forward and tell their story.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

**HIA 27**

Dated

4/6/14

1945-46

Reg No

S. 376. 3

4068

[Redacted]

Admitted 19 November 1945

Recommended by Rev. C. McKelis P.P. [Redacted]

Parents living

mo: [Redacted]

4069 r

HIA 55

r \*

HIA 27

\*4090

[Redacted]

[Redacted]