

HIA REF:

Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 – 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF NHB 84

I, NHB 84 will say as follows -

1. I was born on the [REDACTED] and ordained a priest in the diocese of Down and Connor [REDACTED]
2. I was in Nazareth House for approximately four years immediately after my ordination. I lived in a house in [REDACTED] with a local family. One of my colleagues, DL 467 knew the family and he made the introduction. I received £5 a week stipend from the Sisters for my role as the Chaplain.
3. My duties within Nazareth House were quite varied. I would say Mass every morning at 7.00 am during the week and at 7.30 on a Sunday morning. During the week the Sisters attended Mass as did some of the children and some of the elderly residents. I could not comment on the exact numbers of children or residents who attended. Mass was served by one of the elderly residents. I recall this person's name as NHB 97 He was a resident in Nazareth and would have been the person who assisted me on the altar. I do not recall ever having one of the boys from Nazareth Lodge serving Mass except at two ceremonies in Holy Week. The Sacristy was looked after by one of the Sisters, SR 195
4. After Mass I would have breakfast. Breakfast was served to me in the parlour

at Nazareth House by the Sisters. I was not accompanied by the Sisters and would have eaten my breakfast alone. I did not enter the convent proper itself and I did not have any of my meals with the Sisters. I also had my main meals at my home address and I did not at any time eat with the children. The normal day would have involved Mass, breakfast in the parlour and then I would have gone to visit the elderly residents and spent some time just visiting with them, talking to them and generally spending time with them. Those that were seriously ill I anointed and I also brought Holy Communion to some who could not attend Mass and I may also have taken confessions or other sacramental duties with the elderly. That would have been fitted in to my normal day and would not have been unusual for me. I would go home for my lunch and in the afternoon I would have visited former residents of Nazareth who wanted to see me. Many of the girls left and had obtained jobs in domestic service and I may have visited them during the day.

5. In the evenings I had various duties but out of the convent my duties would have involved assisting and helping out at a club in [REDACTED] That club had been set up by [REDACTED] **NHB 18** [REDACTED] for the former girls. This meant that there was a focal point for the girls after they had finished work or, as in some cases, if they had gone to England or further afield and had returned to Ireland they could have a point of contact to meet up and find some friends. This also allowed the girls to maintain some of the friendships and relationships they had built up in Nazareth House. This was a very worthwhile venture and I was happy to assist in that.
6. I would also have on occasions assisted with visits to Foster Green TB hospital. I was not appointed to Foster Green as a Chaplain in any form but would have gone up to visit in a pastoral capacity to assist the chaplain, Fr Michael Kelly.
7. My religious duties with the Sisters meant that on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I would have said the Rosary and celebrated Benediction in the evening. The religious services would also have taken place on a number of feast days during the year. After the Service I would have returned to [REDACTED] before going to the club or to other duties.
8. My memories of the children are fairly limited. I did not spend time directly with the children on many occasions. From my understanding the Sisters would have arranged for the children to get up in the morning, get washed

and dressed and fed and would then have brought them over to School after, At least some of them, attending Mass . I would have come into contact with the children at school on occasions when I would have attended to visit to speak with them on matters of religious education and to assist in the preparation for First Communion, Confession and Confirmation. I do not recall ever being in attendance for their First Communion or Confirmation and believe that these may in fact have taken place in the Parish Church rather than in the Church in the House. This would have been quite a sensible approach as it would have involved the children being part of the wider community in the Ormeau Road/Ravenhill area. Other than that I really had very little contact with the children. I do recall all the children making Confessions and this would have been reasonably regularly as would have been the practice at the time. Maybe once a month, that sort of time period. My recollection is that the children would have come over in their group with the Sister who was in charge of their group. They would each have said their confession and then would have waited in the Church and then returned to the residence in their group as a unit. The Confessions which I carried out were always held in the Chapel inside Nazareth House itself.

9. Dr. Cathal Daly lived in [REDACTED] close to the House with his mother and sister while he was a lecturer at Queens University. He celebrated Mass sometimes in Nazareth House and took the evening service of Rosary and Benediction occasionally.

10. I remember the layout of the house as follows. There were rooms to the front of the building at ground floor level and that is where I had my breakfast. On the Ravenhill side at Groundfloor level was the residence for the elderly men. On the Ormeau Road side there was a long corridor on the first floor and a room which had some of the youngest children in it. Along the corridor was a stairway which led to the area where the elderly ladies lived on the first floor. At the end of the corridor a stairway led up to the chapel on the first floor and at the end of the corridor at ground floor level were the classrooms. Beyond these rooms were the dining room and residence for the girls but I never visited these. There was also a hall where occasional entertainments were held.

11. I have been asked to respond to an allegation brought by a former resident,

HIA 316 This is not a child whom I remember and I do not recall her in any way. That is not because of anything in particular as I really have very little time with the children and do not recall many of them at all. I can confirm that I was never in the children's sleeping area in day time or at any time. Any times I visited the House at night it would have been as a result of a phone call from the staff to visit an elderly patient who was sick or dying and I would have been met at the doors by one of the Sisters. I did not have a key which allowed me to enter the House. I was let in by one of the Sisters. I would have been accompanied by that Sister when I visited the elderly resident and would then have been accompanied by a Sister who would have seen me to the door again. At no time did I ever visit any child during the night and deny that this event happened as described or at all. If I had been telephoned to visit a child the procedure would have been the same as that in operation for a visit to an elderly or sick person and a staff member would have been present.

12. I have also been asked to comment on an allegation by **HIA 387** or **HIA 387** **HIA 387** Again I do not remember this person directly. I simply deny that the event that she describes could ever have happened as far as I am concerned. The children attended their Confession in groups and would not have left on their own but would have remained in the Church until all of the children had finished Confession and would have left together. It is inconceivable that an event of this nature could have happened without there being a witness and I deny that this happened and deny that I was involved in any incident of this nature.

13. I am aware of various allegations concerning Brendan Smyth having been visiting Nazareth House. I can confirm that I was never aware of Brendan Smyth visiting the Home.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

NHB 84

Dated

05/02/2015

PRIVATE

up in a row outside the nun's cell. I wet the bed a lot. We had to take our sheets and wash them in the bath. If you wet the bed the first night, you got four whacks with a cane. If you wet the bed two nights in a row, you got eight whacks and so on.

6. **SR 116** used to shout at me that my mother didn't want me and they were stuck with me and they didn't want me either. I remember the swish of the roly poly bamboo cane as it went through the air. **SR 116** would lose control and hit me on the head and the hands. She would always hit me on the knuckles where it hurt the most. We would have to hold out our knuckles, we never got hit on the palm. I used to have black and blue knuckles all the time; they were always swollen.
7. Every morning I woke up terrified my bed would be wet, especially if it was the fifth night in a row. I knew then I would be getting twenty whacks. I used to lie and say I hadn't wet the bed to save myself from a beating. I would just sleep in the wet sheets night after night. We must have smelled terrible when we went out to school. I wet the bed up until I was 13. They got a special device which set off a buzzer if you wet the bed and it must have worked.
8. We went to Mass every morning and we also had to say the Rosary and Benedictions throughout the day. The priests I remember are **NHB 84** and Canon Daly. Canon Daly had a relative in the old ladies part of the home. I remember one night I woke up in the middle of the night and **NHB 84** was standing at the edge of my bed. He was quite young at the time. I was about 7 or 8. My nightdress was around my waist. I don't remember anything sexual happening but when I look back as an adult I wonder if I was sexually abused. As soon as I woke up **NHB 84** moved away. That is the only time I remember anything like that happening but it has really stuck in my mind. We would never have seen the priest in the dormitory.
9. After Mass we went down for breakfast which was usually porridge. The food wasn't great but it kept us alive. For dinner we would have meatballs, beans

1 information. Can you just explain what you were being
2 told?

3 **A. Yes.** The only idea I had was, "Don't marry
4 a Protestant. Your marriage is doomed from the start.
5 It is against God's wishes", and then talking about
6 babies, "When was the feast of the Immaculate
7 Conception?" "25th March." "When was Jesus born?"
8 "25th December", and we had to count up how many months
9 that was. I remember being totally shocked, because
10 I thought you had a baby in a week, but that was the
11 only sex education that I ever remember. It wasn't even
12 sex education. That's the only thing I remember about
13 how not to get pregnant or whatever.

14 **Q.** In paragraph 8 of your statement, HIA316, you mention
15 an occasion when the chaplain, as he was then, who is
16 NHB84 -- if we can go back to 829, please, paragraph 8,
17 you mention how there were two priests that you
18 remember. NHB84 you remember was standing at the edge
19 of your bed. He was quite young at the time. Now this
20 was in the dormitory --

21 **A. Yes.**

22 **Q.** -- with -- and there would have been twenty, twenty-five
23 other girls at the time in your dormitory --

24 **A. Yes.**

25 **Q.** -- and then the nun had her cell in the corner?

PRIVATE

13. We had to go to Confession every week. We were only children and weren't doing anything wrong so we would make up our sins. On one occasion, when I was aged about ten years, I was one of the last girls to make it to Confession. The priest came out of the Confessional Box. He got me by my ears, pushed me on the floor and then dragged me back up again. He dragged me in to the Sacristy. He pulled my pants down, forced my legs open and raped me. I didn't know what he had done, but I knew that I didn't like it, and I didn't like the smell of him. I was screaming and kicking and he held his hands over my mouth. He told me that I wasn't worthy and made me beg for forgiveness, and he told me that I had the devil's eyes. I don't recall this priest's name, however he was the regular priest that gave Mass every day, and took our Confessions every week. This was the only time that this happened.
14. There was an old people's home on the other side of the convent. Sometimes we were taken up there and we would be told to sit on an old man's knee. I was never comfortable with this. The old men would touch us on our legs and we would pull away. The nuns would laugh and say "oh go on and give him a hug". It felt like we were being used when we were brought over to the old men.
15. We went to primary school on the grounds of Nazareth House, and then St Monica's Secondary School. My education was inadequate. It was mostly about religion. I learned how to say my prayers forwards and backwards. The only book I can remember was the Bible. I recall one occasion when the Reverend Mother came to the classroom, with a visiting priest. I was being asked questions on the Bible. I said "well if Jesus was a Jew, God was a Jew, why are we Catholics? I don't want to be a Catholic anymore, I want to be a Jew". I was dragged by the hair and they shouted "how dare you, with a name like that". I was slapped and told I wasn't worthy, and made to kiss the priest's feet.
16. Nobody was monitoring our education. We were never tested on any subjects. We were taught our ABC's and how to count but I was never encouraged to

6. With regard to paragraph 8, the children would not have been made to walk naked down the halls and into the bathroom for a bath. Children who wet the bed would have been brought for a bath in the morning.
7. It is clear a number of allegations have been made regarding bed wetting in Nazareth House. The Sisters are sorry that they did not assist [REDACTED] in a satisfactory manner however we do not accept that she was made to walk around the yard with wet sheets on her head.
8. With regard to paragraph 9, the Congregation has considered the quality of the children's clothing. The children were provided with the best clothing available to the Congregation at the time and would have been appropriate clothing for the seasons ie a coat for winter, dresses for summer. Clothing from outside sources and 'hand me downs' were prevalent within Nazareth House and would also have occurred within the community and familial home.
9. With regard to paragraph 10, the Congregation has considered the adequacy of the food in the home. Whilst the food may not have been to modern standard, at no point would we consider it to be poor. In the interests of the child, the Sisters would encourage them to eat the meals provided as there may not have been another option. We do not accept that any child was force fed under the care of the Sisters nor do we accept that any Sister would make a child eat their own vomit.
10. With regard to paragraph 12, we are very upset and deeply concerned by this allegation. As a Congregation, we absolutely and totally reject this allegation.
11. With regard to paragraph 13, the children would not attend confession every week and would be accompanied by a Sister before and after their confession when they did attend. It is hard to accept a child was dragged by a visitor without someone noticing this. We consider any sexual abuse of a child is unacceptable and is to be condemned; we cannot comment further.
12. With regard to paragraphs 15 & 16, the Sisters endeavoured to provide an adequate education for all children. Religion would have been a primary subject within the schooling of children in addition to other core subjects.

1 **A. Yes.**

2 Q. -- and to the Inquiry in your oral evidence. I was
3 asking you earlier whether you could assist with
4 identifying any of the nuns who were involved in this.
5 If we go back to paragraph 12 at 388, the only thing you
6 can remember about them is that one of them involved
7 wore a white dress.

8 **A. Yes.**

9 Q. Was that one -- the one who wore the white dress, to the
10 extent you can remember, was that white-dressed nun
11 always involved in this or --

12 **A. No, not always, no.**

13 Q. So were there other occasions when it was just two black
14 --

15 **A. Nuns.**

16 Q. -- two nuns wearing black --

17 **A. Black dresses.**

18 Q. -- dresses or robes, habits?

19 **A. Yes.**

20 Q. Now the other sexual abuse that I want to talk to you
21 about then, HIA387, is set out in paragraph 13. You
22 were asking me, "Do we have to go over this in detail?"
23 So, as I said to you, I'm going to summarise it for you,
24 because you describe here in paragraph 13 being raped by
25 a priest at you believe around -- you were 10 years of

1 He was someone who was between 40 and 50, although
2 the point you made to me is when you are a child, you
3 can't really tell.

4 **A. Because everybody looks old to you when you are a child.**

5 Q. Yes. He had white or grey coloured hair.

6 **A. Correct.**

7 Q. That's what leads you to believe he was older, because
8 of that hair colour, which was that of an older person
9 or an older man's hair. Is that accurate?

10 **A. Yes.**

11 Q. He was overweight, stocky type build, but of average
12 height.

13 **A. Correct, yes.**

14 Q. I was asking you about his complexion. You don't
15 remember anything particular about his complexion in
16 terms of whether it was very pale or very swarthy,
17 darker. You don't remember anything about that.

18 **A. No.**

19 Q. You do have two distinct memories of two smells. One is
20 -- you do mention in paragraph 13 about the smell --
21 this person smoked --

22 **A. Yes.**

23 Q. -- and you remember the smell of smoke off him --

24 **A. Smoke off him.**

25 Q. -- and the other smell is like an old person's smell --

PRIVATE

a nice priest who said Mass in Nazareth House called [REDACTED] NHB 84 and [REDACTED] would rock over and back saying "[REDACTED] NHB 84 loves me". [REDACTED] NHB 84 was only there for a few months and then he was replaced by [REDACTED] who was alright.

20. Sometimes my sisters and I got out to our mother for a day at weekends. We weren't allowed out for the full weekend, just a day. I used to be sick coming back from these days out because [REDACTED] SR 31 always told us to see if our parents had any money for them. I would dread coming back to the home because when I told [REDACTED] SR 31 I had no money for her she let the whole place know. She would say out in front of all the other children 'we're not keeping you for nothing, what do you think we are – a charity?' It got to the stage that when my mother said she would take us out I'd say I didn't want to go because I dreaded the humiliation so much. I would actually be throwing up before I went back and my mother would ask me why I wasn't well but I couldn't tell her.

21. One time when we were out visiting my mother and my older sister [REDACTED] NHB 66 [REDACTED] NHB 66 noticed that there were big chunks of hair missing from my sister [REDACTED] NHB 69 neck. [REDACTED] NHB 69 had really long hair and somebody had obviously been pulling at it because half her hair was missing. [REDACTED] NHB 66 said she was going to ask the nuns about it but I begged her not to because it would be me who would be punished. I would have been murdered. In the end she didn't say anything. I never told my mother what was happening because I was terrified of her ringing up the nuns and then I would be punished.

22. When I was about 11 or 12 I was sexually abused by an older girl called [REDACTED] HIA 430 [REDACTED] HIA 430 She seemed massive to me. She was about 14 or 15 and she was much taller and broader than me. She had short brown hair, red rosy cheeks and a very square nose. She came into the dormitory one night and told me to come with her. I didn't know what was happening so I went with her. She brought me into her dormitory and told me to get into bed. She said if I didn't she would go and get one of my sisters instead so I got into bed. She took off her nightdress and made me take off mine. We weren't allowed to wear a vest