

DID IRISH NUNS STARVE KIDS TO DEATH?

The insanity over the “mass grave” story in Tuam has now reached a fever pitch. The Irish Prime Minister, Enda Kenny, recently said that the Bon Secours Sisters took the babies of unwed mothers and “sold them, trafficked them [and] starved them.”

That is a serious charge, and serious accusations demand serious evidence. He provided none. Kenny offered not one scintilla of evidence to back up his fantastic story. Not surprisingly, he found a kindred soul in the U.S. in Niall O'Dowd of Irish Central; he quoted his remarks with relish the next day.

Here is what Kenny said on March 7: “No nuns broke into our homes to kidnap our children. We gave them up to what we convinced ourselves was the nuns’ care.” That is all true. But then he goes on to say that the nuns sold the children, trafficked them, and starved them.

The nuns did not sell children to bidders. They placed abandoned and often abused children—abandoned and abused by their mothers and/or fathers—up for adoption. Customarily, as one would expect, the adopting parents would make a donation to the nuns. That’s what people do as a demonstration of their gratitude. But from the Kenny-O’Dowd account, they would have us believe that the nuns ran some kind of auction, selling the kids off to the highest bidder.

Children were “trafficked”? That conjures up images of slave labor. This is a new charge. Kenny and O’Dowd need to share their evidence with the rest of us. Otherwise, we might conclude they are liars.

Children were “starved” to death? This is the most damning of

the accusations. Kenny just throws this charge out there hoping it will stick. O'Dowd is more specific, claiming that some of the children in the care of the nuns died of "marasmus," or malnutrition.

The following explanation of why the children died in the Mother and Baby Home operated by the Bon Secours Sisters was given by an Irish student of this subject.

"For the years 1925-1926, 57 children, aged between one month and three years, (plus two, aged six and eight years) died in the Children's Home. Of this number, 21 died of measles, other causes were convulsions, gastroenteritis, bronchitis, tuberculosis, meningitis, and pneumonia."

The researcher also listed other factors. "Other causes of death were as follows: pertussis (otherwise known as whooping cough), anaemia, influenza, nephritis (kidney inflammation), laryngitis, congenital heart disease, enteritis, epilepsy, spinal bifida, chicken pox, general oedema (dropsy), coeliac disease, birth injury, sudden circulatory failure, and fit."

A total of 22 diseases is cited, but there is no mention of marasmus. Why not? This takes on greater significance when we consider the author of this description: it was none other than Catherine Corless, hero of the "mass grave" fame. It can be found on the last two pages of her 2012 journal article, "The Home."

Let's say Corless is wrong about this; perhaps she overlooked the marasmus. The real issue here is not whether kids died of malnutrition—let's assume they did—the real issue is O'Dowd's intellectual inability to conceive of any reason other than intentional starvation.

Dr. Jacky Jones worked for the Irish health services for 37 years in the field of health education and health promotion. She says that "high infant mortality rates were normal for certain groups of people in Ireland until the 1970s." She

further notes that "Children from poor families were four times more likely to die before their first birthday."

Now ask yourself this: Were the children of indigent unmarried mothers in the early twentieth century more likely or less likely to be part of that segment of the population as described by Dr. Jones?

Those children who were dropped off at the convents were not the sons and daughters of the rich. They were the abandoned and often abused offspring of parents who could not, or would not, care for them. That some of the children may have been suffering from malnutrition when they were acquired by the nuns would hardly be surprising, and it is just as unsurprising to think that some died "before their first birthday," as Dr. Jones said.

If this is too hard for O'Dowd to understand, then perhaps he thinks that the reason why more people die in hospitals than in hotels is because hospitals are known for killing people. It would never occur to him that the sick and dying are more likely to check themselves into a hospital than a hotel. Get the point, Niall?

It is malicious to accuse anyone of intentionally starving children to death without proof, and it is even worse when an entire order of nuns is charged with doing so. That is what the Prime Minister of Ireland has done, and that is what the founder of Irish Central has done.