

“MASS GRAVE” EVIDENCE IS LACKING

Bill Donohue comments on the lack of data presented by those making the case for a “mass grave” in Tuam, Ireland:

Reform advocates, for any cause, have a tendency to exaggerate the problem they seek to remedy, and the extremists in their ranks are even worse. A case in point is the “mass grave” issue.

I have a doctorate in sociology from New York University, and I am accustomed to rendering decisions based on data, empirical evidence, and logic. Everyone has an opinion on any given subject, but those that are unsubstantiated do not carry as much weight as those that are. On this score, the mass gravers come up short. Much of their reasoning is based on conjecture, and some of it is pure fiction. It hardly exaggerates to say that their evidence is lacking.

Take the widely bandied about figure of 800 children found buried outside the Mother and Baby Home run by the Bon Secours Sisters. The evidence is non-existent. Here is what we do know.

On March 4, the Irish government reported that “significant human remains” were found outside the home.

Barry Sweeney says he saw “15-20 small skeletons” in a hole there in 1975. He is cited by Catherine Corless, the source of the “mass grave” thesis, as her prime eyewitness.

Douglas Dalby, writing in the *New York Times*, said in 2014 that “Ms. Corless *surmised* that the children’s bodies were interred in a septic tank behind the home...” (My italic.)

Last week, I was interviewed on the Irish radio program,

"Newstalk." The host, Sean Moncrieff, is a mass graver, as is Mick Heaney of the *Irish Times*. Both are furious at me for saying that the 15-20 figure is not proof of a "mass grave." Their response—that the government found a "significant" number—makes my point, not theirs.

From the beginning, my position has not been that no wrongdoing ever occurred in these homes, but that assertions of a "mass grave" have not been proven by anyone. Moreover, such wild accusations only feed the prevailing animus in Ireland against the Catholic Church.

Moncrieff and Heaney are livid over my statement that there is a "huge" difference between saying that a "significant" number of remains have been found and claims that 800 bodies have been discovered. They accuse me of playing "hair-splitting games."

This is precisely the kind of lame response I would expect from those who have no evidence to support their claims. Like Corless, they are free to *surmise* all they want, but they cannot expect serious scholars to allow conjecture to substitute for fact.

Why does this matter? Because of all the scurrilous accusations that have been made about the nuns creating an "Irish Holocaust." Extreme mass gravers are throwing around numbers with abandon, all designed to smear the nuns.

For example, the *Irish Mirror* ran a headline on March 3 saying, "Order of Nuns that Dumped Up to 800 Babies into Septic Tank Must be Disbanded." Nowhere in the story is there any evidence about 800 babies being "dumped" in a sewer, but, ironically, the article does provide evidence of my charge: throwing around huge numbers feeds anti-Catholicism.

It should also be noted that Corless has explicitly separated herself from accusations that the nuns "dumped" the bodies of babies in a septic tank. "I have never used the word

'dumped,'" she told Dalby.

Irish Central is leading the mass graver extremists.

On March 4, it ran the following headline: "Tuam Mass Infant Grave is Confirmed, Now What Are We Going to Do About it?" In fact, no confirmation was given. The article cites the "significant" number account, but offers no proof that the government confirmed the existence of a mass grave.

On March 8, in an article on women's rights, Irish Central said, "Just last week 800 babies were found buried, abandoned in an unmarked grave in Tuam."

This is an out-and-out lie. The bodies of 800 babies have not been found buried. Irish Central literally made this up. It is pure fiction.

Irish Central has a moral obligation to provide pictures of the 800 bodies found in an unmarked grave in Tuam. Where are the pictures? Time to put up or shut up.

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