

MOTHER TERESA'S ORDER UNDER FIRE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on news stories about the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata (previously referred to as Calcutta), India:

Mother Teresa's order, the Missionaries of Charity, has come under fire for allegedly being involved in a baby selling racket in Kolkata. There is little doubt that four babies were sold by a lay woman working with the nuns. But attempts to pin the blame on the nuns are specious.

This story unfolded on June 29 when government officials from social welfare and child protection agencies showed up at Nirmal Hriday (Tender Hearts), a home for the dispossessed run by the sisters in Ranchi. The proximate cause of their visit was a report that a woman had given birth there on May 1. The mother quickly decided to surrender the boy to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC).

A ward helper at the home, Anima Indwar, and the mother, said they would surrender him to CWC. But this never happened. Instead, Indwar contacted a couple looking to adopt and offered to sell the baby. The biological mother did not want her child, and on May 15 he was given to the couple without registering the adoption.

When an official from CWC began asking questions, Indwar asked the couple to return the child, temporarily, saying she was simply dealing with some "formalities." Indwar then gave the boy back to his mother, without informing the adopted parents. The parents wanted the child back and filed a formal complaint with CWC. This is what triggered the inquiry.

Were the nuns in on this scheme? Indwar reported to Sister Concelia, the nun in charge of the unwed mothers section at

Nirmal Hriday. It is alleged that Sister Concelia was complicit in the transaction. But was she?

There is a statement from Indwar saying that Sister Concelia was not present when the baby was given to the adopting couple. Moreover, Indwar admits that she sold the four babies.

In a video statement, Sister Concelia said the following: "I came to know that a baby, delivered in May, was missing when the Child Welfare Committee came to check. We found that the baby had been sold by a staffer." She confronted Indwar.

"When I initially asked the staffer about the baby," Sister Concelia said, "she did not want to tell me anything. It was only when I kept pressing for details that they told me the baby had been sold." Allegedly, some of the money went to a guard, and some to "a sister," though Indwar did not keep any of it.

Now ask yourself: Why would Sister Concelia press Indwar about the details of the sale of the baby if she were in on the deal? Moreover, Indwar herself admitted that the nun was not present at the time. None of this seemed to matter to the authorities.

When Sister Concelia was questioned by the police, she was not provided with counsel. Reportedly, she admitted playing a role in the transaction. She subsequently acquired a lawyer.

Her attorney says she was set up. Sister Concelia told him she "was forced by the police to give her statement." Bishop Theodore Mascarenhas, a local auxiliary bishop, went further, saying the police are "treating the whole of Mother Teresa's organization as a criminal gang."

Sister Mary Prema Pierick, the head of the Missionaries of Charity, says she is cooperating with the authorities. But she is livid over what she says are the "many myths being spread, information distorted and false news being diffused and

baseless innuendos being thrown about regarding the Mother Teresa Sisters."

Sister Prema is particularly incensed about the police raids on their homes. On July 4, the police seized records and 11 unwed mothers from Nirmal Hriday, and two days later they took 22 children, including a one-month-old baby, from the Shishu Bhawan Home in Hinoo.

What makes these raids so outrageous is that just two weeks prior the CWC described the homes as providing an "excellent environment for the care of children." However, this matters little to anti-Catholics, the most prominent to emerge so far being author Taslima Nasreen.

Nasreen took the opportunity to indict the entire Missionaries of Charity, and its founder, Mother Teresa. "Mother Teresa charity home sells babies, it is nothing new. Mother Teresa was involved with many illegal, inhumane, immoral, unethical, unprincipled, wicked, fraudulent, barbaric acts."

This is a lie. In my 2016 book, *Unmasking Mother Teresa's Critics*, published by Sophia Institute Press, I explored all of these accusations, and more, and found them to be wholly unfair and inaccurate. Those making such charges are uniformly Catholic bashers, most of whom are atheists. Christopher Hitchens was the most famous, and the most discredited, of them all. He never laid a glove on her.

It comes as no surprise that Nasreen is a Catholic basher and an atheist. When asked in 2015 if there is anything wrong about celebrating Christmas, she tweeted, "Yes. I can't celebrate lies. Jesus's mom was not a virgin for sure. And he was no God's son either." She admitted in 1994 that she was an atheist. Not surprisingly, she was honored three years ago by the Catholic-hating atheists at the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

Among the Indian defenders of the sisters is Mamata Banerjee,

Chief Minister of West Bengal and a member of the All India Trinamool Congress. She condemned the “malicious attempts to malign their name.” She blames the Hindu nationalist ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, for targeting the nuns.

Bululai Marandi, founder of the Jharkhand Vikas Morcha party, has accused the government of orchestrating a “media trial.” And most important, the Catholic Bishops Conference of India has condemned the government for pressuring Sister Concelia to give a statement.

Those seeking to indict the Missionaries of Charity have failed to produce the unqualified evidence that has surfaced regarding the culpability of Anima Indwar. Trying to rope the sisters into this scandal is the real scandal.