

The Real Catholic Story of the Mother and Baby Homes and of the Orphanages in Ireland

By An Orphan Who Grew Up In One.

In 2015¹, 195,000 babies died from Pertussis² or Whooping Cough around the world according to official figures of the Atlanta Centre for Disease Control. Worldwide there are 16 million cases³ each year, again according to official figures, while many are treated with simple antibiotics, many die needlessly⁴. That is an extraordinary fact in itself and there is evidently no cure in sight, so babies will continue to die from this one singular disease around the world and little can be done about it. Millions of other babies died in various wars, in the Workhouses of Europe from different diseases, from starvation, and neglect. We could be asking lots of historical questions about these events, but the main one would be is why, why do we allow children to die.

Who is to blame for these untimely deaths, could it be the Governments of the day, the parents, the hospitals or even the nurses, or lack of

¹ Centre for Disease Control Atlanta

² Bacteria that affects the lungs-if left untreated with antibiotics will kill.

³ United Nations Statistics 2016

⁴ Lack of the very essentials and clean water

medicines or Catholic religious sisters, or even poverty and ignorance or is it that nobody universally had been found yet to pin the unavoidable deaths of these poor children onto, to blame in other words. Infant mortality around the world is very high these days in fact the United Nations figure puts the figure at 43 per 1000⁵. This applies to every country in the world including Ireland, but uniquely the Irish seem to want to apportion blame to someone for the death of their child, and often times they blame the wrong people⁶. They tend to blame those who have helped them most in a type of schizophrenic way, looking for restitution of one kind or another⁷, edged on by an anti Catholic media⁸ who fill the heads of Irish people daily with a diverse diet of fake and sensational news on radio, television and in the National Press.

In 1922 a Civil War⁹ broke out in Ireland during which time, thousands of people were murdered by opposing Irish forces¹⁰, many were captured and imprisoned because of their political affiliations, others fled the country never to return. Historical records were destroyed and the country was left impoverished¹¹. However there are some interesting statistics that may shed light on Ireland's impoverishment especially in rural areas which were deprived of almost everything but daylight itself.

The 1926 census¹² shows that some 405,029 people emigrated from Ireland in that year, while the general population of 2.9 million decreased by almost 200,000. By 1960 the population of Ireland would reach its lowest figure of 2.1 million.¹³ In 1926 however the number of

⁵ 2016 UN figures.

⁶ It is always the Catholic Church in one form or another

⁷ Usually money.

⁸ Irish media have an anti Catholic agenda-namely to destroy the Catholic Church in Ireland

⁹ Something that politicians want to forget

¹⁰ Fianna Fail and Fianna Gael and the IRA

¹¹ All the records were burnt in Dublin as a result of the shelling.

¹² CSO figures

¹³ Ibid

births recorded in Connacht was 175,588 while the number of deaths recorded in the same year was 122,218 leaving some 53,000 newborn babies.

The main causes of these deaths especially of the children from 1921 to 1963 was from the Spanish flu, Scarlet Fever, Cholera, Meningitis, TB, Malnutrition, and later in the 1940's Syphilis which was brought back to rural Ireland, by men who fought for the UK during WWII and who infected their wives who went on to have children born with syphilis and who soon after died from it¹⁴. These were some who died from extreme poverty, others from severe malnutrition and even the cold, damp winters.

There were no antibiotics, no electricity in rural Ireland for most of this time, let alone running water, and for many the only mode of transport if they were lucky was a donkey and cart¹⁵. The State had no money and the entire economy was based on Agriculture. Those who are old enough will remember the old monetary coins with chickens, pigs, cattle and fish on them. Ireland was in a terrible state, impoverished in every respect, its people uneducated and for the many able bodied men the only way forward was to take the ship to England and work as a labourer.

Given this impoverished situation in Ireland which was known throughout the world, especially because of the potato famine from 1845- to 1849, coupled with massive emigration¹⁶ and the general poor situation of those who remained, help was urgently needed and prayed for.

¹⁴ Causes of death, published in the Sunday Independent 2010

¹⁵ Historical Facts- rural electrification only came about in the

¹⁶ Ireland lost close to one million due to starvation and another million left to a better life.

The only help that came was from Pope Pius IX¹⁷ (Pio Nono¹⁸) who solicited aid for Ireland from around the world in an Encyclical called “Praedecessores Nostros.” Money came¹⁹, some even came from the Native Indians in Oklahoma²⁰, but it came. This allowed for the building up of the necessary and essential Catholic Infrastructure²¹ of schools, clinics, homes for the dispossessed, and hospitals. Part of the money went towards the building of churches and to help the dioceses²².

With some of this money and monies from other fundraising events the religious in Ireland, like the Sisters of Mercy²³, the Franciscan Sisters²⁴, the Medical Missionaries of Mary²⁵, the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul²⁶ and the Bon Secours²⁷ Sisters just to name a few, began to build the Nations Hospitals, in an Ireland which was devoid of Medical facilities following the unnecessary war of Independence, from Great Britain.

These Sisters built the Mater Hospital in Dublin²⁸, Our Lady of Lourdes in Drogheda²⁹, Saint Vincent’s Hospital³⁰ in Ballsbridge, the Portiuncula

¹⁷ 1846-1878.

¹⁸ Endearing term.

¹⁹ Said to be 400 million euro’s in today’s money.

²⁰ Choctaw Indians- gave one million dollars in today’s money according to Judy Allen, editor of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma’s newspaper, *Bishinik*.

²¹ There was little or no Catholic Infrastructure as the monasteries have been burned down and land seized.

²² 26 diocese-some bishops have apostolic administration of up to three other diocese-making it 34 diocese.

²³ Founded by Mother Catherine McAuley in 1831 to care for the poor, the sick, and to instruct the ignorant.

²⁴ Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Divine Motherhood,

²⁵ Founded by Mother Mary Martin in 1937 in Nigeria Born 1892-died 1975.

²⁶ The Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul was founded in Paris in 1633 by St. Vincent de Paul and *St. Louise de Marillac*.

²⁷ Twelve women living in Paris became aware of the great need to care for the sick and the dying, during and after the French Revolution. This group of women began to nurse the sick, and unlike other carers remained in the home, day and night, demonstrating God’s healing presence through compassionate care. The group chose Josephine Potel, their Founder as their leader, and in January 1824 made their first profession as Sisters of Bon Secours in the Church of St. Sulpice in Paris. News of the tiny group’s spirituality, and the ‘good care’ they offered to rich and poor, spread. Other young women joined the congregation. They came to Ireland in 1861-it was their first mission outside France. They opened residential homes for pregnant girls whom society had rejected and cared for them.

²⁸ Founded in 1852 and opened by the Sisters of Mercy in 1861 to provide care for all, rich and poor alike.

²⁹ Founded by the Medical Missionaries of Mary as a training hospital in 1957.

³⁰ Founded by Mother Mary Aikenhead of the Religious Sisters of Charity in 1834.

Hospital³¹ in Ballinasloe and the many other hospitals³² around the country. The Sisters of Mercy³³ were the champions of care and concern for the poor. They even started the nursing schools, training and educating young women to be nurses, and such was their good reputation that many countries sought these same nurses offering many incentives for them to leave Ireland and to begin a new life in the different countries around the world³⁴. The archdiocese of Dublin under Archbishop John Charles McQuaid³⁵ who helped built the National Children's Hospital in Crumlin where thousands of children's lives were saved, and all of this came about because the State had no money for such infrastructure.

Many of the Religious Sisters went on to build the school system in order to educate and form the pupils and prepare them for their futures. The Bishops build the local schools³⁶, churches and clinics, building a Catholic infrastructure for a Catholic Nation consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

³¹ Founded by the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Divine Mother hood in 1945.

³² Up to 75 other hospitals in every county in Ireland were founded by Religious to help the poor.

³³ The Venerable Mother Catherine Elizabeth McAuley (**29 September 1778 – 11 November 1841**) was an Irish nun, who founded the Sisters of Mercy in **1831**. In 1832 the Sisters staffed the Cholera Hospital in Dublin and she herself died from TB. In 1958 Mary Beata Bauman, at the time Dean of the University Of San Francisco School Of Nursing, published this wide-ranging study describing the nursing work of Catherine McAuley and her successors. Her successors comprise the 19th century nursing sisters in Ireland, including those who served at the Crimean war, as well as those who took their principles and system of nursing to the USA. Bauman identifies a pattern of nursing administration and practice originating with Catherine McAuley, developed further by her companions and successors in Ireland, and carried by many of them to the USA. In the USA this pattern, or system, of nursing became evident in the many hospitals and schools of nursing they founded, owned and operated. This same pattern is evident in the mission of the many faith-based hospitals and health systems that succeed them today.

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ A great but yet unrecognised Saint was Archbishop of Dublin 1940-1972. He also established a wide range of social services for the poor of the city. He is especially remembered for his work in the area of charity. In the first year of his episcopate he oversaw the establishment of the *Catholic Social Welfare Conference* which co-ordinated the work of the great number of charitable organizations existing in the city. The following year (1942) he set up the *Catholic Social Welfare Bureau* which helped emigrants and their families. He had a personal interest in providing for people who suffered physically, mentally and spiritually.

³⁶ In Dublin alone in and around 1942, 80 new churches were built, 250 primary schools and 100 secondary schools in order to deal with the expanding population.

In reflecting on the men and women who dedicated their lives and freedom for the benefit of others in education and health care, I am deeply moved by the thinking of the people of today who want to say that all of the priests and all of the religious of the past, both men and women were evil and none of them were any good or ever did any good.

I was brought up as an orphan in Lenaboy³⁷ in Galway, by the Sisters of Mercy. It was no fault of my mother or of the Sisters that I ended up there. But there I was loved and cared for in the best way that these religious Sisters could³⁸. They formed me and educated me and prepared me for my future life. While they could not make up for a fractured and destroyed family made possible by my Father's departure to Canada and who abandoned my mother, leaving her in a society which had no free money by way of welfare, as she found could no longer pay the £2.00 per week rent to a drunken landlord, the Sisters did their best and I thank them for that, and retain very fond memories of my time in Lenaboy Castle.

In the Bon Secours Sisters "Mother and Baby" home in Tuam³⁹ it is important for me to try to explain to the public that the Sisters there were not murderers or evil doers as they have been portrayed by the Irish media. This type of home, so urgently needed at that time as there was no alternative, saved thousands of lives of both the mothers and the babies entrusted to their care, was opened in 1925 under the care of the Irish Board of Health who supervised all operations within the home. The sisters did not patrol the streets of the West of Ireland or of any other place looking for girls who had children out of wedlock. The Victorian mentality of that time past was not compatible with Catholic

³⁷ Lenaboy Castle

³⁸ Until I was 7 years old.

³⁹ The reason why I am writing this paper is to express my horror at the media in how they presented the Sisters in a most negative way, an anti Catholic way and a way I know to be totally untrue.

thinking even then. The measure of the Church was her expression of Charity and Her doors were always open to help the poor and distressed. Yes there were some religious who were cruel, there is no doubt about that and I experienced that myself with the Christian brothers⁴⁰, some were even perverts⁴¹, but in the main most of them were saints who gave their lives for the benefit of others. In fact most of the Bon Secours Sisters spoke French, only the superior spoke English, and most of the 11,800 who went through the doors of the Tuam home only spoke Gaelic.

In society today whether it is in the army, the guards the medical profession, the legal profession etc you will find your same percentages of bad people, perverts⁴² etc, but we don't normally condemn them all, unless they are Catholic⁴³, and then we can say what we want even if it is all lies or calculated misunderstandings.

In the Mother and Baby homes, mothers came or were brought by their parents with their babies or while pregnant seeking help. The sad truth is they were unwed mothers who were in the first instance rejected by their own families. We can ask the question, why? Was the family so impoverished that they could not feed another mouth? Perhaps was there more to the behavior of their daughters who may have been uncontrollable, wild, even loose women, we don't know. We can only assume by today's standards that if a young girl got pregnant and she came from a good family that her family might support her. But even by today's standards if the young woman was wild and uncontrollable and came home expecting a baby she too would be expelled from the family

⁴⁰ Some of the brothers were cruel, but I knew many of the to be Saints, but there was a discipline that had to be followed, perhaps nowadays that same discipline would not be acceptable, but in the 60's and 70's it was by all.

⁴¹ As proved by the courts after police investigations. These men should never have entered religious life, but it is unjust to paint all of the brothers as perverts, that is not true.

⁴² Less than .1 of 1% of the religious were identified by the Courts as being paedophiles, whereas that percentage rises to 6% in family life and higher in other areas like prisons and the military.

⁴³ It would seem that only Catholics get persecuted.

home, and I am aware of some cases even in this year of 2017 where this has happened. There certainly was immorality then in the 1920's through to the 1950's, as there is now, except now young girls use contraception, the pill, condoms and if both of these fail, they opt for abortions in the UK where some 8,000 young women went in 2016 to terminate the lives of their unborn children. Perhaps this immorality is even more widespread than every before.

Another question that should be probed, who were the fathers of these children and why have they chosen to remain silent and place the blame on the unwed mothers whom nobody seemingly wanted. These are the real cowards that should be identified and shamed.

Children died in these homes not because of the lack of care⁴⁴ but primarily because of the lack of medicines, in particular antibiotics. There was on average 1 death per month⁴⁵ at the Tuam, Mother and Babies home, from 1921-1963 due to sickness. Again the causes were already listed as scarlet fever and cholera and other highly contagious diseases which I have know some of the Bon Secours Sisters were infected with and also and died⁴⁶ from, but there is no mention of that in the media. I also have no doubt, given the history of the Bon Secours Sisters in Tuam⁴⁷ that all children were baptized and anointed before

⁴⁴ The Bon Secours gave their very lives to helping the poor unfortunate girls deal with their situation by providing a home for them, and food and whatever medicines that were available at that time-all free of charge.

⁴⁵ 796 babies died between 1925 and 1963 a total of 836 months, which is considered low considering the diseases that were being dealt with then.

⁴⁶ A study at the death certificates of the Bon Secours Sisters, who worked at the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, will prove this.

⁴⁷ The order of Bon Secours Sisters, led by Mother Hortense McNamara, took over the Tuam Workhouse in 1925 and converted it into "The Home". This resulted from the prior closure of all workhouses in the county by the Galway Board of Health, and the transfer of the hospital wing of Glenamaddy Workhouse to Tuam.

Unwed single women who became pregnant were sent to give birth there, rather than at a hospital or at home. The nuns were trained nurses and midwives. In 1927, the Board of Health directed that a maternity ward be added to the Home so that the mothers could be segregated from the public wards. This was built in 1929

they died and I am also sure that every care was given to the Mothers during and after the deaths.

The problem was what to do with a dead baby that nobody wanted to know about? The nuns had to by law report the deaths to the Garda, and a doctor certified the death stating the causes.⁴⁸ Given that there was no money for a funeral or even a coffin, nothing could be done except to place the deceased child into a purpose built burial chamber, which had some 20 individual compartments inside it which was suitable for the burial of those who died with contagious diseases. Ground water would not be contaminated for example by cholera which was a killer in Ireland in the 1920's and 30's, as was TB.

Galway County Council who actually own the burial site and who have always owned it would have had to give their approval for burial under these circumstances along with all the authorities of the State, the place of burial was not a decision of the Bon Secours Sisters in any way shape of form; rather it was up to the Councils who still run the Irish cemeteries. That said, there was thousands⁴⁹ who survived these harsh and cruel times of Irish History. There were media reports that dead children were interred in the burial chamber at midnight, yes that was true but only in the cases of those born and who died from syphilis in order to save their parents from embarrassment and shame.

Many of the children born out of wedlock were given up for adoption by their mothers. These children were generally sent to orphanages and their data was sent to the Irish Adoption Agency. In many countries like The United Kingdom and the United States there were many childless couples who longed to have and to love a child and to adopt an

⁴⁸ The records are there for all to see and were published in the National Newspapers.

⁴⁹ Over 10,000 unwed mothers passed through the mother and baby homes from 1921 to 1963. The mortality of the babies was put at 796- which means that over 9,000 survived who would not have survived otherwise.

unwanted child and give them a home and a life. This was good for the children themselves, but the procedure was difficult and long. It involved the governments both the Irish and the adoptive parent's governments. Permissions had to be given to take the children out of the country once suitable parents had been found, passports had to be issued by the respective embassies and the religious sisters had to be satisfied that the children entrusted to their care were going to a good home. The notion of children being sold over the counter to buyers from other countries without the necessary checks and permissions being put in place is more than absurd- it is a gross insult to anyone with an ounce of intelligence. This is part of the fake news story that nuns were trafficking children with impunity and without any legal restrictions-it just didn't happen! Adoptive parents in Ireland who have in the past 30 years been adopting children from Romania, China, Russia, and other countries know very well, that this is not the case, as there are too many complexities involved including medical records and tests to be done before any child is deemed fit to travel, even to a foreign country.

Conclusion;

In 2011, there were 1,148,687 children living in Ireland⁵⁰. This accounted for one-quarter (25%) of the total population of Ireland, 587,782 were boys and 560,905 were girls. In 2011 alone, 393 children died in Ireland. This equated to an overall child mortality rate of 3.4 per 10,000. Of this 393 children who died 28 died from malignant neoplasm's, 93 certain conditions in the perinatal period, 124, congenital malformations, 16 sudden death syndrome, 27 from injury and poisoning, and 105 from unspecified other reasons⁵¹. The child mortality rate is higher for boys than for girl's right across the EU.⁵² The total

⁵⁰ CSO State of the Nations Children 2012.

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Table 8, Ibid

number of children living in a lone parent household in Ireland in 2011 is almost 250,000⁵³. In the same report we see that 2,300 children were taken into care by the State in 2011 of which almost 10% died in the care of the state from the years 2000-to2011⁵⁴. Nothing is said or reported in the media about these cases despite the various causes of deaths including suicide.

When it comes to the care given by the religious, there were evidently fewer deaths in the 38 years of the Mother and Baby home in Tuam which is stated to be according to the death certificates 796 persons or babies. If we were to calculate for the same period of those who died in the care of the State in 2011, namely 230 children over the same period the number would be 8,740⁵⁵. Nobody is crying abuse, murder, compensation, or any other expression about these deaths as tragic for the parents that they are and a great loss to society as a whole⁵⁶.

However if it involves some aspect involving the Catholic Church, then there is the cry for revenge, financial compensation, which now in the billions of euro, name calling, fake and sensational news put out by the National media to sway the feeble minds of the ignorant and uneducated Irish who swallow the stories hook line and sinker.

But there is an insidious agenda behind all of this –that is the repeal of the 8th Amendment of the Irish Constitution to allow abortion right up to the 36th week of pregnancy. In order to do this and to sway the Catholic voter-the agenda via the media is to demonize the entire Catholic Church in Ireland and to get people so incensed by a distorted view of the magnificent and heroic work done in Ireland in the past 150 years by the men and women who gave and devoted their lives to the service of the

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ CSO figures.

⁵⁵ Potential figure based on the 2011 reports on children in State care.

⁵⁶ These are all the insinuations levelled at the Catholic Church in Ireland in the past 35 years.

poor of Ireland in order that they might receive a decent education, a religious formation, a life of prayer and a prosperous pathway to the future. One only has to look at the successful businessman of Ireland today, even the political leaders of the country, all of whom were educated for nothing by Catholic Ireland, and for that gift, they wish to condemn and destroy the Church and with it all of its assets, based on pure bigoted anti Catholic sentiments which this very poor but happy and unwanted orphan knows in his heart to be totally untrue, all of it. Let the people ask for the truth, let it be given to them and then let us walk forward united together in grateful thanksgiving for those who went before us and who made our pathways straight.

The immorality of young men and women has not got any better since 1926, as I have said before-rather than have “unwanted” babies some 8,000 women in Ireland, many of them Catholic prefer to kill their yet unborn child depriving them of the right to be born and the right to be redeemed, while many other Catholic women are on contraceptive pills which not only kills their unborn, but will eventually kill the mother as it causes cancers of the breast, ovaries, womb and brain. Then these mothers will have to answer not only to God but to their murdered children. There are no more Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland as the anti Catholic sentiment does not allow it-but the Government of the day, flush with money will not support young unmarried women who become pregnant due to living immoral lives.