

Witness Name: Gloria Mary Ramsay

Statement No.: WITN0021001

Exhibits: WITN0021002 - WITN 0021006

Dated: 15/09/2020

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GLORIA MARY RAMSAY

I, Gloria Mary Ramsay, state:

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. My full name is Gloria "Glo" Mary Ramsay. I was born on GRO-C 1950 in Auckland and I am 69 years old.
- 1.2. I was sexually and emotionally abused by while attending St Mary's School (**St Mary's**) in Northcote, Auckland. The abuse occurred between 1957 and 1959 when I was aged between seven and nine years old.

Early life

- 1.3. When I was born, I was taken away from my biological mother, GRO-B, shortly after my birth.
- 1.4. My biological mother left me in the hospital when I was a few days old and I was put into the care of the State for adoption. I do not know where I was living for the time that I was in the care of the State. All my adoption paperwork refers to me

as being an "illegitimate child". The stigma of this followed my adopted parents around.

- 1.5. I recently obtained a copy of the Order Committing Child to Superintendent of Child Welfare, dated 17 January 1951, which specified that I had to be raised and educated as a Roman Catholic. This was signed by a Justice of the Peace in the Children's Court.

[Refer Exhibit - Adoption Order [WITN0021002]

- 1.6. I am not sure why I had to be raised as a Catholic, as my biological mother was not Catholic, and my biological father was not named on my birth certificate. The requirement that I be raised and educated as a Catholic has determined my entire life. By that I mean, my adopted parents were required to commit to raising me as a Catholic to be able to adopt me.
- 1.7. My biological mother was a musician. She had a breakdown after her husband left and took their two kids with him. She was committed to the Whau Lunatic Asylum, later renamed Oakley Hospital, where she was subject to electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). After she was released, she went on to have two more children. Her family allowed her to keep my older brother, [GRO-B], but I had to be put up for adoption.
- 1.8. Dame Hilda Ross was my biological maternal great aunt. This made me an "important baby". I was told by my (adopted) mother that it was Dame Hilda who arranged for my adoption. My biological half-brother [GRO-B] told me when we finally met in 1986, that Dame Hilda and my grandfather had huge fights as my maternal grandfather did not want me to be adopted.
- 1.9. My birth father who I have recently identified through DNA was not Catholic either. Later in life when I met my birth mother she was surprised at the size of my family, and I explained well, because you were Catholic I had to be raised Catholic and that's why I've had six children. She was surprised at that and could not explain why the specification for Catholicism was on my adoption papers, although she mentioned that she used to take [GRO-B] to the cathedral and think of me at the time.
- 1.10. My adopted mother, [GRO-B], was Catholic, which was one of the requirements of the adoption. My (adopted) father, [GRO-B], was not Catholic. Dad was a wharfie - he worked on the wharf.
- 1.11. I grew up with my adopted family in Birkdale on the North Shore.

- 1.12. My father had been brought to New Zealand from England as a nine-year-old boy, with his little brother, to Piopio in Waitomo during the Great Depression. His brother went back to England and died in the second world war. My father never saw his family again. My relationship with him was good, Dad was always singing or whistling. Our home was full of music.
- 1.13. I felt very loved by my adopted family. There were happy parts and mean parts as well. There was some alcoholism but I don't feel like I experienced poor parenting. I remember Dad was only bad with whiskey. We had extended family who lived nearby in Beachhaven, and an Aunty and Uncle who had a farm in Dairy Flat who were a happy feature of my childhood particularly around celebrations or yearly events. At holidays, I would often stay at the farm in Dairy Flat.
- 1.14. Although she was Catholic, I don't recall Mum being staunch or devout when I was little.
- 1.15. I started St Mary's when I was five years old. I remember being told that I had to go to the "special school" because I was Catholic.
- 1.16. Closer to the time of first communion, when I was around seven, Mum started to take me to Mass regularly. I think there was some pressure on her but I don't know that for sure. We would bus from home to Church at St Mary's Parish on Onewa Road. Later, after I had found out about my adoption, she would tell me that if she hadn't adopted me she wouldn't have to go, she wouldn't "have to sit through this" if it wasn't for me. I expect that was usually when she might have had other things on her mind or possibly a hangover, not wanting to be there but having to go because that was the commitment she had made in order to adopt me, to my Great Aunt. Other days she attended with me no problems, that was just one of the messages I got when I was a little girl.
- 1.17. When I started school, I was in awe of the man in the long black dress with the white collar. This was Dr Francis "Frank" Terry (Father Terry) who later became my abuser. Father Terry was based at St Mary's Parish in Northcote in the 1950s.
- 1.18. One day at school we were talking about Joseph being a foster parent to Jesus. The teacher asked if anybody in the class was adopted and one of my classmates said that I was, and that I didn't live with my real parents. Until this point I had no idea that I was adopted. My classmate had overheard adults in her family talking about the fact that I was adopted.

- 1.19. My mother was very upset when I came home and innocently asked, "why aren't you my real mother?" and went to stay with her friend that night. I thought I must be a bad child because neither my biological mother nor my adopted mother wanted me. My relationship with my mother changed after that.
- 1.20. Finding out about my adoption was difficult, it happened after the abuse had first occurred and confirmed to me feelings of worthlessness.
- 1.21. Once everybody knew that I was adopted I was faced with the stigma of being an illegitimate child in the 1950s. All of this, compiled with the abuse I suffered, made life very difficult as a child. I was a very confused, wounded and a lonely little girl.

2. THE ABUSE

- 2.1. I remember some of my classmates, both girls and boys, at St Mary's being called regularly to the Presbytery to see Father Terry. This began happening when I was around seven years old and approaching the age of communion.
- 2.2. A classmate's name would be delivered to the teaching Sister on a note and then that person would go to the Presbytery. The same children were summonsed regularly, sometimes one after the other.
- 2.3. I recall one classmate who was also a boarder at the school, receiving a note saying to me she was going to have to go and see father to tell him about the rudies with her father. At such a young age I had no idea what she was talking about.
- 2.4. One day my name was on the note. I remember feeling very special as this was the first time that I had been called to the Presbytery to see Father Terry.
- 2.5. In the Presbytery, Father Terry put me on his knee. I later woke up lying on the cold, hard floor in a strange room. My head was spinning, and I was retching and struggling to breathe. I could hear a man's voice in the distance and Father Terry's housekeeper was wiping my face with a damp cloth whispering "there, there".
- 2.6. After that, a nun came in with a spare pair of clothes for me to change into. This is the only time I was called to the Presbytery.
- 2.7. I am sure that Father Terry sexually abused me while he masturbated. Even though I have had counselling and hypnosis I have not been able to recover a full memory of my sexual abuse.
- 2.8. After that, Confession became the gateway to further abuse. Father Terry would force me to confess to having engaged in "impure actions" with other children.

- 2.9. Confession would last a long time because he kept asking me to describe what other children were doing to me and confess my "impure sins" but I didn't know what he was talking about. He then told me he knew of things that I had done, even though they never happened. I eventually learned to lie and just repeat the things that never happened to please him so that Confession could end.
- 2.10. While he was encouraging me to describe these so-called "impure actions" I could hear him breathing heavily and the confessional room would shake.
- 2.11. Father Terry would routinely tell us the story of Saint Maria Goretti, the 12-year-old girl who forgave her rapist, even though we had no idea what rape was. He also reinforced in us the view that victims were always to blame. They should be prepared to die a martyr rather than allow someone to be impure with them.
- 2.12. Every time I had to attend confession, I would feel sick. Sometimes I would faint, vomit and cry. My mother took me to see two doctors who couldn't find anything wrong.
- 2.13. It seemed to me that most of the children, including myself, would try and see Father Terry's assistant, Father Joe Foley (Father Foley), for Confession. Father Foley was a lovely, gentle man. Father Terry was very mean to Father Foley and would force him to go for long periods without food, and I remember women in the Parish would worry openly about Father Foley and the treatment he endured.
- 2.14. Sister [GRO-B-2], was also at the school and was physically abusive. Once when I was about seven, Sister [GRO-B-2] used the ruler on me and I bled from my injury, my mother saw the injury and was very upset and complained to the school. I don't know the outcome of that complaint.
- 2.15. My piano teacher at St Mary's was Sister [GRO-B-3]. She was often emotionally, verbally and physically abusive towards her students. Sometimes she would scream at us, throw books, and hit students with rulers. I remember one incident where a girl was being hit repeatedly while she hid under a desk. It was terrifying.
- 2.16. Once she screamed at me and when I tried to run away, she dragged me across the room.
- 2.17. At the end of another lesson she was screaming at me, not realising that my mother was waiting outside and could hear everything. My mother was furious and cancelled my piano lessons. My mother complained to Mother Placid, the Superior, and I know my mother got action with that complaint, as Sister [GRO-B-3] was moved.

- 2.18. Not long after, Sister GRO-B-3 and Father Terry left the school. I was about 10 years old at the time.
- 2.19. We received physical discipline for many things, talking, being noisy in class, I learnt to stop putting my hand up, eventually.
- 2.20. Fear was an ongoing theme of the religious teachings at St Mary's. We were told by the nuns that priests like Father Terry were the closest thing to God. Father Terry made sure that we all knew that if we were naughty, we would go to purgatory and hell.
- 2.21. I attended St Dominic's for high school which back then was across the road from St Mary's. Things had changed since Father Terry had gone, but I still started trying not to go to Church but I had to sing in the choir and attend funerals and didn't mind doing that. I personally didn't observe much physical discipline there.
- 2.22. My mother received some inheritance around that time and I got to go with her to Santa Cruz in the United States.

The abuse of others

- 2.23. Father Terry had regular involvement with a number of school activities. He was often in the playground during school hours, where he would come down and pick kids up. He was in charge in some way of the Catholic girls' netball teams at Mt Eden as well. He also was involved at Knock na Gree camp in Ranui which was a holiday camp for catholic children who didn't go to Catholic schools, to teach them the catechism.
- 2.24. At school a classmate disclosed to me that "something had happened" with Father Terry and she had told her father about it. She told me this while we were on a school bus, but I didn't take it in at the time. I didn't make the connection then that it was likely the same offending that had happened to me. I was terrified of him but back then I thought I was the only one and that it had happened to me because I was bad. I was illegitimate and I was adopted. Children can't make sense of that sort of thing.
- 2.25. Father Terry was indeed moved out of the parish and I didn't encounter him again. Father Jim Shanahan came next and was just lovely, so different. He said to me later as an adult that he knew something had happened to the kids when he joined the parish because the children there were always around him behaving differently and actively looking for physical attention, which I now know to be a common behaviour in abused children.

- 2.26. By the time I was 17 years old I was married and pregnant with the first of my six children.
- 2.27. When my daughter was six months old, she got meningitis and was on life support. At this point I bargained with God. I promised to return to the Church if my daughter survived. My daughter made a full recovery and I returned to the Church.
- 2.28. One day in the 1990s I was talking to my friend who also attended St Marys, after another of our classmates, had passed away. We were talking about school when my friend suddenly said, "bloody Terry". It was then that I realised that she had been abused too. Until then I thought that I had been the only one.
- 2.29. She knew another school friend, aside from her, who had also been abused by Father Terry. It was empowering when I realised that it wasn't just me. I then felt that I had to stop it and couldn't let it happen to anyone else.
- 2.30. I told my mother about Father Terry after I found out that this friend had been abused. My poor Mum was absolutely mortified. She was extremely fond of my friend too.
- 2.31. Both of my parents and my husband later died of cancer and I nursed them while they were dying. After my parents died, and shortly before my husband GRO-B-1 was diagnosed with cancer, I walked away from the Church.
- 2.32. I know of the abuse of others, due to my later work with the Catholic Church and referred to in more detail below. Over time I became a receptacle of these stories, and on some occasions, I was able to link abuse stories due to the prolific nature of the abuser. I discovered whole networks of abuse victims linked together by the same perpetrator, over years, sometimes decades, of a single person's abuse.
- 2.33. Of particular relevance to my story was the offending by someone who was not a clergyman. He was however someone who had wide access to young altar boys and girls. Around 2003, I was sought out by a man at the Birkenhead RSA in Auckland, who knew that I used to work at St Patrick's Cathedral. He told me that he was related to this abuser and that he had also suffered abuse at his hands. The survivor hoped I could find his address so he could deal to him.
- 2.34. Of the many survivor stories that I heard having become known as an advocate, this was particularly relevant to my story as I later discovered that this abuser had also abused three others, including men I had seen grow up within the Church. There were over ten years between victims. GRO-C

GRO-C

GRO-C

. Of the three men who survived, they disclosed their abuse as adults and did not take the matter further with the Church – preferring to get independent counselling and move on with their lives as they were able. I know the impacts on two of these men to include substance addiction and serious health diagnoses.

2.35. I am sure that there are so many ordinary parishioners who are unaware that they are a part of a wider network of abuse. Their genuine desire to move on should be commended however the Church benefits from victims self-silencing and, when complaints are made, the assessment of individual claims are hidden from other victims. So to my mind, ordinary parishioners are caught up in a process which protects abusers.

Work for the Catholic Church

2.36. I volunteered at St Patrick's Cathedral during the 1980s, leading children's liturgies and in numerous other ways.

2.37. In the early 1990s I was employed as a pastoral assistant at St Patrick's Cathedral. I was also studying theology, completing a pastoral counselling degree.

2.38. I was paid to work 20 hours a week for the Church, but often ended up working closer to 60 hours a week.

2.39. I had a close mentoring relationship with GRO-B-4 who had a strong passion for the laity. We worked on a forgiveness liturgy. I had thought about going public with naming my abuser back then, and she said no, to think of his family who are still alive. GRO-B-4 said it would destroy his sisters and that really held me back.

2.40. In 1991, I helped form in the formation of a survivor's support network which aimed to encourage survivors of abuse to come forward.

2.41. When my contract suddenly came to an end at St Patrick's Cathedral, I was offered a position at the Auckland Diocese as a religious educator, parish program provider.

2.42. I still have letters from Cardinal Williams and various bishops in relation to setting up this support network. I will refer to several letters by way of example.

[Refer Exhibit – Letter from G Ramsay to Cardinal Williams dated 30 September 1992 [WITN0021003]

[Refer Exhibit – Letter from Cardinal Williams to G Ramsay dated 2 October 1992 [WITN0021004]

[Refer Exhibit – Letter from Bishop Gaines to G Ramsay dated 1 October 1992 [WITN0021005]

2.43. I was also then invited by Bishop Denis Brown to be a member of the five-person Bishop's Protocol Committee which was a diocesan body tasked with implementing the Church's response to clerical abuse claims. The Committee included two lawyers.

[Refer Exhibit - *Towards Tomorrow* newsletter (undated) p 4 [WITN0021006]

2.44. During that time, I was totally indoctrinated in the Church and I had it in my mind that I must try to rescue everyone.

2.45. Part of my role as a survivors advocate was to help in the planning and presentations of workshops for clergy alongside members of the Safe Network in Auckland, which offers counselling for harmful sexual behaviour, and Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS).

2.46. While working for the Church I was privy to various Presbytery conversations about behaviours happening within the Church. I can recall one conversation between two priests, one who had just come back from the Pacific Islands. The gist of the conversation was that it was accepted that of course abuse occurred, just as long as they didn't ever let themselves get caught.

2.47. Everyone in the institution knew what was going on. The focus was on moving priests on rather than addressing the offending.

2.48. Rehabilitation only became a real concern in the 1990s when people started saying that the Church had to be seen to be doing something.

2.49. I was also aware of a known paedophile who was living in the Presbytery at St Patrick's Cathedral while I was working for the Church.

2.50. Relating to the offender described above at paragraphs 2.32 onwards, I made contact with a couple of members of our old survivor's support network myself, and attempted to find a strategy to get some closure for the people who had given me their stories of abuse. I was encouraged to meet with Monsignor David Tonks from the protocol committee. In July 2014, I met with him along with another survivor who joined me as a support person.

2.51. After the meeting I received an email from him saying that nothing could be done as no one had any memory of any other offending by that person. The late Monsignor Brian Arahill who is now deceased but was still living at the time, had no memory of the eldest of the survivors ever mentioning anything. He advised me that there was one person who did recall the abuser training altar servers at one stage, but the survivors would have to make complaints themselves. The survivors were never prepared to do that, and I would never have advised them to do that. It was obvious they would never be believed.

3. THE IMPACT OF THE ABUSE

- 3.1. The abuse I suffered at St Mary's has affected my entire life.
- 3.2. It affected my marriage and my ability to achieve physical intimacy. For long periods of time I was unable to have sex with my husband [GRO-B-1]. When he would suggest certain forms of intimacy, I thought he was nuts and that he was abusing me.
- 3.3. For long periods I was unable to talk about the abuse because I didn't understand it. I attended counselling both by myself and with [GRO-B-1] and eventually we were able to talk about it. [GRO-B-1] died of asbestos tumours when he was 49.
- 3.4. The abuse I suffered at St Mary's also impacted my ability to parent my children and still affects our relationships to this day.
- 3.5. When my first born turned seven, the same age that I was when the abuse occurred, I began to feel uncontrollable rage. I was scared of myself and how I would react to certain situations. I had three small children at the time.
- 3.6. My [GRO-B] ended up joining a gang and using methamphetamine. He is now terminally ill with brain cancer.
- 3.7. One day when I was around 40, I had a momentary loss of control when I was driving, all rational thinking stopped. I was so consumed with rage that I was ready to check out and take the world with me. I put my foot on the accelerator and went for a head on collision with another car. At the last minute I realised the gravity of what I was doing. I believe that this rage was a result of suppressed rage from the trauma suffered at St Mary's.
- 3.8. Prior to the incident in the car I was having nightmares that I was trapped in a coffin and that Father Terry was nailing it shut.
- 3.9. In 2007, I had a small accident which resulted in me developing Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS). Initially I lost the use of my fingers, hand and

arm. This resulted in the loss of my ability to continue in my career which at the time was Payroll Management. I went from earning a salary of more than \$65,000, to earning \$15 an hour working in social work. I faced battles with ACC and was forced to sell our family home in Auckland. This put enormous stress on family relationships. The partner I was with at the time did not work. I was on massive pain medication for the next 5 years which affected my long-term health. I discovered then that CRPS affects mainly women aged in their 50's who have been affected by trauma.

- 3.10. Eighteen months after GRO-B-1 died, I had a 17-year live in relationship with another man. I was still in rescue mode. Over time he became extremely critical and often became emotionally abusive which would get worse whenever he drank alcohol which was most days. Eventually he became physically abusive. As a result, I lost much of the little self-worth and confidence that I had gained through building a successful business career. After his final assault I lost my house, friendships and the respect of some of my family.
- 3.11. I realise now the level of manipulation that I was subjected to by the Church and the impact it had on my entire life.
- 3.12. I struggled to say no or express an opinion in case it upset someone when in stressful situations. I was unable to find or speak the right words. I often lost my voice and said nothing which would irritate others. I was terrified of not pleasing others and feared rejection. It was like being stuck in the confessional with Father Terry.
- 3.13. I met my birth mother in 1986, after the birth of my sixth child. I also recently found out who my biological father is, and I met my half-brother and half-sister for the first time earlier this year.
- 3.14. I have made peace with my faith and still carry a crucifix with me as I believe in the light of Christ and I do not observe my spirituality through adherence to Catholicism.

4. REDRESS

- 4.1. After finding out that my friend had also been a survivor of Father Terry's abuse, I spoke to Bishop Denis Browne about the abuse I suffered along with the other victims from our support group (whose names I did not share.) Bishop Browne complimented my "strong" faith and suggested that through my experience I could help other survivors return to the faith and get closure. This was the beginning of

my work with other survivors, which eventually led to being invited to volunteer as a Survivor's Advocate on the first Protocol Committee for the Auckland Diocese.

- 4.2. I had a few counselling sessions with Sister Marie Pollard SM. I did not find the counselling helpful. She spoke to me like I was still a five-year-old and told me that I could "punch some pillows" if I was angry about the abuse.
- 4.3. Bishop Browne did not offer me any form of external counselling or compensation. He just encouraged me on the mission of rescuing other victims. At the same time, I felt that he was genuine and proactive, he spoke out about other issues as well. In hindsight, he might have been considered progressive.
- 4.4. Later, Bishop Dunn came in 1996 and he was less progressive than Bishop Browne. I felt that the headway the Protocol Committee had been making, was now being stymied. This was one of several things that happened around the same time and contributed to my decision to leaving the role with the Church and leave my faith.
- 4.5. Another occurrence was when I was sent as the sole representative of the Church to sign a survivor of abuse up to a non-disclosure agreement which would provide them with a cheque for compensation. Previously I had attended meetings with survivors to provide support for them in their engagement with the formal Church representative who was there to provide the apology, however this time I was sent alone, because there was no one available from the Church. This experience shocked me to the core that I would be expected or even asked to do that, it made me feel like I was complicit, an enabler. I really struggled with the knowledge that I had fronted a Church apology for abuse to a survivor, when in fact I was a victim myself. This was not as part of the Diocesan Protocol Committee, but to represent the Dominican Religious Order.
- 4.6. Most importantly, from a survivor perspective, it showed to me that the Church didn't understand the value of an apology in person from someone who should feel responsible, and who could be held accountable.
- 4.7. I left about 18 months after Bishop Dunn's appointment. My husband GRO-B-1 died shortly thereafter and so I only had a short time with him where my whole life was not coloured by my faith and the Church.
- 4.8. I have had a lot of counselling and sought various other alternative healing avenues to assist my healing journey to try and overcome the trauma I

experienced which has dominated my life. I would have spent thousands on training, books, and courses.

- 4.9. Father Terry died in 1979 so making a Police complaint was not an option.
- 4.10. In 2018, after being assaulted by my former partner, experiencing homelessness, living out of my car, and facing the permanent loss of my home, another survivor contacted Bishop Pat Dunn and arranged for me to meet with him. I went to the meeting hopeful of some kind of support. I shared my story about my current situation, about the disclosures from the networks of survivors I had met, and how it was affecting me. We drank tea. As I left he suggested I keep in touch with the local parish priest presumably for pastoral support. That was the first time I ever considered redress.
- 4.11. I have never been offered an opportunity to seek redress through the Church. I am ready to do that now.
- 4.12. My work on the Protocol Committee reinforced to me that the Church should never be left to investigate its own complaints. It has a one-sided agenda. Clergy first. The 'faithful' members of the church who become victims of abuse, are at the bottom of their priority. There needs to be a far more rigorous, fair, just, effective, and accessible compensation process.
- 4.13. During my time as a pastoral assistant I felt that any real attempts to address abuse had been hindered by secrecy and legalism within the Church.
- 4.14. I believe that the Church's protocols for handling abuse complaints contained in *A Path to Healing – Te Houhanga Ronga* have not delivered transparency and are lacking in integrity. It is a path to covering up, rather than healing. It emphasises 'reconciliation' but the church's version of reconciliation only takes into account 'forgiveness' by the survivor with no justice whatsoever for the survivor. Nothing in it reflects the experience of survivors, many of whom lose all sense of self as they remain indoctrinated in a church that puts the institution first and re-victimises survivors.
- 4.15. The Church's response is a top down approach that fails to listen to survivors or address its profound legacy of abuse and neglect.
- 4.16. One of the biggest obstacles for survivors was that in making a complaint they would immediately come up against the Church's lawyers, who would ensure the Church was protected. That would deter the reporting of abuse.
- 4.17. I also found that the preservation of Canon Law took priority over the pastoral care of people.

4.18. Many of the survivors I spoke to would not make complaints as they did not trust the process. For others, the shame of sexual and spiritual abuse was too powerful. Indoctrination guaranteed silence.

4.19. In the end I felt I was colluding with the Church, not helping survivors, and being part of something not nice at all. I felt huge guilt and shame for my overall involvement, and deep disappointment for not putting my real story forward, a true survivor account, to give credibility to survivors for what I now see was a disingenuous process. I felt that I did not fit in with other survivors who knew I was a colluder. They did not judge me, but I still judge myself.

Statement of Truth

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

15/9/2020

Not relevant to Natural Justice process

Signed.

GRO-C

Date

15/9/2020