

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MKY

Support person present: Yes: [REDACTED] (son).

1. My name is MKY [REDACTED]. My date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1961. I am 57 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. Between 1968 and 1972 I was resident in a boarding school called St Columba's College, at Landour House, 118 Greenock Road, Largs. The College was run by the Marist Brothers. I also spent time in day school at St Joseph's College, Dumfries as a day pupil between 1972 and 1977. St Joseph College was run by the Catholic Church. It is mainly my time at St Columba's that I want to tell you about.

Life before going into boarding school at St Columba's College.

3. I was the only child of [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. My father was an electrician. Both my parents came from Catholic family backgrounds. My parents did not get on and my father was quite violent towards my mother. I spent a lot of time at my grandparents.
4. My family had a long association with the Marist Brothers. My grandfather [REDACTED] was associated with the Marist Brothers between 1940 and 1970. [REDACTED] As a very young boy I was a regular feature at St Joseph's College and knew a lot of the staff.

5. My earliest schooling was spent at St Andrew's Primary school in Dumfries. I think that I spent primary years one and two at the school. It was decided because my parents were splitting up that I be sent to Catholic boarding school at St Columba's College, Largs. This was College run by the Marist Brothers. My parents needed to get me out of the way.

Sexual abuse by Brother MFQ prior to going to St Columba's College, Largs.

6. I was due to go to St Columba's College after the summer holidays of 1968. I was seven years old. I was very comfortable around the Marist Brothers and the Catholic Church [REDACTED]. My family were particularly friendly with Brother MFQ who taught at St Joseph's College.
7. That summer Brother MFQ was going to Middlesbrough to visit his mother. I had never been away on a holiday. It was agreed that if we use our family car and take him to visit his mother in Middlesbrough we could stay with Brother MFQ and his mother. I spent most of my time with Brother MFQ while my parents went off on their own. It was then that he betrayed my trust.
8. I slept in the same room as my parents. One of the mornings Brother MFQ took me up to his room. He had been drinking heavily the night before. He made me carry out acts of a sexual nature on him. When he ejaculated I asked him what the sperm was. He told me that it was whisky from the night before. I had absolutely no sexual experience as I was only seven years old.
9. Brother MFQ hadn't finished. I was naked from the waist down. He then raped me. He told me in no uncertain terms that I was never to tell anyone what had happened. It was a time in the 60's when you never questioned what you were told. I was too frightened to say anything to anyone.

10. Brother MFQ also took me to the local swimming baths where he continued to sexually assault me by touching my private parts. The morning before I left to go home his mother made porridge for me. She put sugar on my porridge and I was used to salt. It is just something that stuck in my mind and I can't forget it. I associate it with the sexual assault on me and being told to say nothing.
11. Most days in life I drive past the graveyard at St Joseph's School and I see the gravestone of Father MFQ. The gravestone states that he was born on the [REDACTED] 1929 and died on [REDACTED]. I find this particularly difficult as he never seems to be out of my memories.

St Columba's College, Largs, Scotland 1968 – 1972

12. My family and I had been so involved with St Joseph's College that becoming enrolled at St Columba's College was a very easy step. The College itself was a very large old family house. The College was a fee paying Catholic boarding school run by the Marist Order.
13. I spent the first two years at St Columba's College waiting to be sexually abused by one of the Marist Brothers. I had been sexually abused by Brother MFQ prior to my arrival at St Columba's and I thought it would happen again. After two years I realised that I was safe and it was not going to happen.

Routine at St Columba's College

First day

14. I was taken there by both my parents. They stopped the car at the front door and I got out with my suitcase. I was met at the front door by Brother Nilus who was the headmaster. He was a very tall man. He was wearing a robe that went all the way

down to the ground. It was very intimidating. I turned round to look for my mother but she had gone.

15. I was in a panic. I had to sink or swim. I had to decide whether to make a run for it or follow the instructions I was being given. I was told to go to my dormitory and find the bed with my name on it. There were six other empty beds. I was told to make up my bed.
16. My mother had bought me double sheets and I had difficulty making up my bed. The door had been closed and my parents had left without saying goodbye. I think this is what the Marist Order did to make saying goodbye easier. I was terrified that the Brothers here might want to abuse me like Brother MFQ had, prior to me coming to St Columba's College.
17. We were split up into age groups and lived in dormitories. One dormitory had ten boys in it but generally the numbers varied between six and two in each dormitory. In total there were about thirty boys boarding along with a few day pupils. The ground floor consisted of four classrooms. There was a large hallway and a stair case to the bedrooms on the first floor.
18. At the back of the property were the kitchens where all the meals were cooked. The dining hall was beside the kitchens. There were rooms for the Marist brothers who lived at the school. I think they were beside the boys dormitories. There were maybe five or six brothers who resided at the school. Most of them taught at the school.
19. There was a second floor which I think had a dormitory and also some rooms that were occupied by the Brothers. At the end of every academic year you would change dormitories to remain with boys of your own age.

Staff

20. The staff that I remember being at the school were Brother Nilus who was the headmaster when I arrived there. In the second year I was there Brother Germanus

took over as Headmaster. I was taught by Brother ^{MLA} who I trusted implicitly. I didn't feel that he was a threat to me. I always remember Brother ^{MFN} who once gave me six of the cane for getting a wrong answer. He was a teacher at the school.

Mornings and bedtime

21. It was a very strict routine. You were wakened in the morning by whichever Brother was on duty. You had to wash and brush your teeth. Then your bed had to be made in a certain manner. If you failed to do this properly there would be consequences. If you didn't make your bed in the prescribed way it would be pulled apart and you would have to make it again.
22. After breakfast you would play some football and then head off to classes for the rest of the day. Wednesday was a half day and the afternoon was dedicated to sport.
23. In the evening you would do homework and then before bed you were allowed to play board games. Everybody went to bed around 8:30 pm and then it was lights out. It was a routine that accounted for all your spare time.
24. On Saturday morning you would be at school doing academic work. It was always sport played on a Saturday afternoon. It was usually football as Brother ^{MLA} was a football fanatic. I don't remember playing rugby or other sports.
25. Sometimes on a Saturday you would receive family visitors. You could also have visits on a Sunday. At the weekend you would also go on an organised walk with the rest of the boys through the school grounds and down to the beach.
26. When I was in Primary three or four there was a fund raising scheme to build a gymnasium at the College. Brother ^{MLA} was the ^{SNR} and he arranged the appeal for money. It was built on to the side of the building and it meant that we could do a lot more activities in the gym. I think that most of the money was raised by parents of boys at the school.

27. When I was at the College the pupils we were expected to maintain the upkeep of the buildings and the grounds in good order. We would do some weeding in the gardens and also pick up litter. I think we did some cleaning in the College itself.

Mealtimes / Food

28. The cook was called Frank Burns. He made the meals with whatever food was available and I had no issues with the food. We would sit in our age groups in the dining hall and one of the Brothers would sit at a table on his own to supervise.

Washing / bathing

29. There was a men's washroom on the second floor of the building and a shower room on the middle floor. There were four showers in the shower room and you took it in turns to shower. The bathing and showering was supervised by one of the Brothers who would be on duty and there was a rota.

Clothing / uniform

30. You had a wardrobe beside your bed and you were responsible for looking after your own clothes. You had to lay them out on laundry day. All your clothes had to be labelled with your unique number. There were really only three sets of clothes, school uniform, pyjamas and football kit. I never had leisure clothes.

School

31. In hindsight the education at the school was probably not the best. It was more along the line of character building and discipline than academic achievement. If they couldn't teach you they knocked it into you. I often got caned for getting something wrong. I would describe myself as a middle achiever. I had particular difficulty trying to learn French. All the teaching staff were Marist Brothers.

Trips / Holidays

32. There were no trips during the holidays as we would all be back home. On a Saturday or a Sunday we would go to the beach on an organised walk. Once in a blue moon we would be taken to the cinema.

Religion

33. We all practised the Catholic religion. We had to go to the local church every Sunday. I recall that when we went to the church part of the uniform was to wear a 'sou'wester hat'. We also said grace before every meal and I seem to remember the odd Priest that would visit to say mass.

Birthdays and Christmas

34. We were always at home for the Christmas holidays. There was usually a cake for celebrating your birthday and your parents would send you presents. The school would sing happy birthday to you and everyone got a piece of cake.

Visits / Inspections/ Review of Detention

35. I did get visits from my mother. A neighbour of my mother lent her a car which meant that she was able to travel and visit me. If the weather wasn't good she wouldn't make it. Brother ^{MLA} would make sure that I was spirited away if they thought that my father was coming to visit. The Brothers felt that it would be safer for me if my father, who was very violent was kept away from me. My parents' divorce was very acrimonious and they were concerned what he might do.
36. It was a long spell at the College if you didn't get a visit. There was one term when I was told that my mother was in hospital and I didn't receive any visits. I found that strange. I was either eight or nine at that time. My grandparents did not have the wherewithal to visit on their own.

Healthcare

37. I do not recall ever having to visit a Doctor or a Dentist the entire time I was at St Columba's.

Discipline

38. You were expected to follow a set of rules. It was a very strict regime. It was made clear to you what was required. If you went outside these rules you would be punished. The Brothers would hit you with a cane or you could have have a blackboard duster flung at you. You could get six of the cane for not getting an answer correct. You learned to keep your head down and not to make eye contact with the teachers.
39. You always got the cane on your hand. On some occasions it was given in front of the other boys and on other occasions it was given to you in Brother Nilus's office. On reflection I think it was excessive for a primary school pupil to be caned in that manner.

Running away

40. I never thought about running away as I had no place to run away to.

Bed wetting

41. I don't recall incidents with anyone wetting the bed and I had no issues with that.

Abuse at St Columba's College

42. On one occasion Brother MFN gave me six of the cane on my hand for getting a wrong answer in class. I was in primary four and was probably about eight years old. I think that on this occasion it affected me more than any other time. I maybe got caned on eight or ten occasions. The cane was always administered on your hand.

43. The excessive punishment was the only form of abuse that I suffered at St Columba's. The sexual abuse that I experienced at the hands of the Marist Brothers was when Brother MFQ abused me just before I went to St Columba's. It had a very bad effect on me because when I arrived at the College I was expecting to be abused again and spent the first two years waiting for it to happen. It never did and eventually I was able to feel more relaxed.

Explanation for not getting visits for a whole term at St Columba's.

44. I did not receive any visits from my mother for a whole term at St Columba's. What I didn't know at the time but learned later was that my mother was in hospital having complications with the birth of twins.
45. My mother was in a relationship with [REDACTED] who was a [REDACTED] working at St Joseph's School. They had three children between them including twin girls who were born when I was at St Columba's and a boy born two years later. [REDACTED] was teaching at St Joseph's when I was there.
46. When I came home from St Columba's [REDACTED] had been asked to leave [REDACTED] and was living with my mother at her house. He eventually died when he was living with my mother.
47. All three children were adopted at birth by a Catholic organisation that was based in Newcastle. This was arranged by the Marist Brothers. I think that [REDACTED] had a very negative effect on my mother and I resented his presence. I was in the middle of what was happening and The Marist Organisation did not lift a finger to help.
48. My grandparents did not speak to my mother till after [REDACTED] died. Even then the relationship between my mother and her parents was not good. I felt that I suffered for this and it affected the way I viewed family life.

Leaving St Columba's College, Largs in 1972

49. I left St Columba's College after four years in 1972. I knew that I was going to attend St Joseph's. I learned before I went to St Joseph's that Brother MFQ was no longer teaching there and had gone to Wolverhampton. I was very relieved.
50. On occasion I know that Brother MFQ sometimes came back to St Joseph's to stay when he was on retreat. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] he would call in to visit my mother. It would make me feel very angry towards him and I think that because I was older and more aware I could easily have done something physical to hurt him.
51. The influence of the Marist Order was much less at St Joseph's as the Order were no longer running the school and it now formed part of the local education authority. I was attending St Joseph's as a day pupil so there was no pressure on me as I lived at home. In spite of this I always felt that there was an undercurrent of sleaziness.
52. I left school half way through sixth year at the same time that St Joseph's became co-educational. I needed to get to work to help with my mother's financial situation. I had achieved enough qualifications to go to university but I just couldn't afford it. There were no Technical Colleges at this time so there were no paid apprenticeships.

Life after being at St Joseph's

53. I went into the retail industry and joined the Coop. It was here that I met my wife and I married her in 1981. I continued to work in retail for most of my working life. In 1993 or 1994 I became ill and had to take time off my work. I had a complete breakdown. I had two children by then and another child was due. It was a combination of things that caused the breakdown.

54. At this time my mother in law became ill and I became a full time carer for her. I also had to take on looking after my own mother as a carer. I have five children aged between 16 and 27 and we are a close family unit.
55. One day I was driving in Dumfries when I spotted my father walking in the street. I'd had no contact with him since he divorced my mother. My wife [REDACTED] was expecting our first child. I spoke to my father but unfortunately he passed away five weeks before my first child was born and never got to see his grandchildren.
56. My wife passed away in [REDACTED] 2016 very suddenly. My eldest daughter took the passing of her mother very badly and suffered with mental health problems which she is succeeding in overcoming. I have kept very poor health for the past few years. I have two forms of cancer CLL and SLL which are types of leukaemia.
57. My wife [REDACTED] was very influential in the family and was the glue that held us all together. Her passing was very hard on everyone as she had always been so healthy and there was no indication of any illness.

Impact

58. I started to have panic attacks when I was at school. I still see a psychiatrist to this date. I am very proud that even after what happened to me I managed to get my life under control and brought up my own family. I often describe myself as a twenty stone man with the temper of a seven year old boy. I could have got into serious trouble.
59. Ever since I was eighteen or nineteen I have been a regular visitor to the local psychology department. It all started with the panic attacks and the fact that I was self-harming. I think that I was referred to them by the local doctor. I have never been admitted as an in-patient.

60. The abuse I suffered at the hands of the Marist Order has had a huge effect on my life. I have gone through a lifetime of panic attacks. I have never been able to travel abroad because I couldn't use public transport. I get so angry because of the things that I am unable to do with my family like holidays abroad.
61. I found that the relationship my mother had with [REDACTED] made for a very bad atmosphere in the house where he lived with my mother and me. I was attending St Joseph's School and he had been [REDACTED]. I was never comfortable. My mother lost her relationship with her own parents and everything felt wrong.
62. I worry all the time about my children and particularly found it hard when they were about the same age as I was when I was abused by Brother MFQ [REDACTED]. I used to ask myself if it was appropriate that I should take my own children out of their bath to dry them off. I feel that I can't shake of the feeling that Brother MFQ [REDACTED] is still having an effect on me.
63. I am on a lot of tablets to help treat my mental health problems. Amongst the tablets that I take are diazepam, seroxat, paroxetine and amitriptyline. I also have medication for leukaemia.

Reporting of Abuse by Brother MFQ [REDACTED]

64. The first person I told about what had happened to me was my wife [REDACTED]. It coincided with the time that another pupil [REDACTED] had gone to the Police [REDACTED] and reported what had happened to him when he was in the care of the Marist Brothers at St Joseph's in Dumfries. His courage in coming forward prompted me to tell my wife and then report it to the Police. I needed her support.
65. In 1998 I reported to the Police in Dumfries what had happened to me on my trip to Middlesbrough when Brother MFQ [REDACTED] sexually assaulted me. I gave a statement to the

- Police in Dumfries. The local Police passed on the information to the Police in Middlesbrough. Because the offence occurred in Middlesbrough it had to be dealt with under the English legal system.
66. I felt let down by the Police in Middlesbrough. All that I wanted was for someone in authority to confront Brother MFQ with my allegations and to illicit a response where he would admit what he did to me.
67. I made a complaint to Ronnie McEwan who was the Provincial for the Marist Order. I met with him on four occasions and he listened to my complaints. I met him at Kinharvie House in Dumfries in 1999 or 2000. The last meeting I had with him was in 2015. I think that Brother MFQ was in Lourdes till 1998. He was brought back to England where it was decided by the Police in Middlesbrough that he was not fit enough to be interviewed. The Scottish Police 'off the record' told me that if they had been investigating the issue they would have charged him.
68. All that I really wanted was for someone to confront him with my allegations and see what he had to say in response. Having met with and spoken to Ronnie McEwan on about four occasions with regards to Brother MFQ I also met and the current Provincial of The Marist Order Brother Brendon Geary on one occasion. I used my email to facilitate these meetings at Kinharvie House. The last meeting I had with McEwan and Geary was at the Cairndale Hotel in Dumfries in 2015.
69. I learned that Brother MFQ had at one time tried to commit suicide and that my allegations against him answered some questions that Ronnie McEwan had about the state of Brother MFQ mind and his suicide attempt. Although I asked them on a number of occasions about other allegations concerning Brother MFQ they refused to comment. They told me that they still had a duty of care to Brother MFQ. It annoyed me that there was such an emphasis placed on his welfare and not mine.
70. It is nearly eighteen months since I have had any contact with the Marist Order. I informed them that my wife had died and that I was suffering from cancer and I was calling things "quits".

71. I am aware that Ronnie McEwan works at the Kinharvie Institute in Glasgow. I also know that about six miles outside Dumfries is a place known as Kinharvie House and that is where the Marist Order used to train all their staff.

Records

72. The Police tried to get the records relating to my time at St Columba's but were told that none existed. I am aware from the evidence that Brendon Geary has already given to The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry that no records are held by the Marist Order.

Lessons to be learned

73. Everybody who has suffered abuse in care need to be given the opportunity to tell their story. The abusers of children need to be brought to account and face their accusers for what they have done. It does not matter when it occurred. What is wrong is wrong and it needs to be addressed.

Other information

74. In later life my mother told me that she had been trying to track down her children she had with [REDACTED]. She told me that The Marist Order were particularly unhelpful but despite that she had traced the twin girls. The twins came to Dumfries and met my mother and me. A few home truths came out and that was the way everyone wanted it left. I had no contact with the boy who would have been my half-brother as he didn't respond to any correspondence.
75. I have always suspected that my mother may have had a relationship with Brother MFQ [REDACTED] and that he may be my biological father. When I was twelve I felt that he was visiting my mother for sex. Why else would he call as it wasn't to visit me and he resented my presence there. It still torments me and I can't stop reflecting on it.
76. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed... MKY [REDACTED]

Dated... 18/01/2019.