

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Joseph Currie

Support person present: No

1. My name is Joseph Andrew Currie and my date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1953. I am 64 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. The institutions I want to tell you about are Nazareth House in Aberdeen where I was resident for two separate spells between 1955 - 1959 and 1961 - 1967 I also had a period of foster care between 1959 and 1961 with the Middleton family in Aberdeen. When I returned to Glasgow I was also in a home called Lochgarry in Cleveden Drive, Glasgow between December 1967 and 1969. I also had a further period of foster care with the Taylor family in Chancellor Street, Glasgow, the Fleming family in Renfrew Street, Glasgow and the McColl family in Victoria Road, Glasgow.

Background

3. I was born in Glasgow and resided with my mother [REDACTED] and my father who had a name like [REDACTED]. My father owned a laundrette in Eglington Street, Glasgow.
4. My mother was an alcoholic and worked in a [REDACTED] factory in Tollcross, Glasgow. [REDACTED]

5. My mother could not cope [REDACTED] and in checking my records I have learned that the social services became involved when I was about two years old. My mother had appeared at Turnbull Street Magistrates Court in Glasgow and been fined five shillings for neglecting [REDACTED] me.
6. In view of these circumstances [REDACTED] placed in Nazareth House in Aberdeen. [REDACTED] I went to the nursery. From reading my records I learned that [REDACTED] into care in Aberdeen to prevent my parents from visiting in case they were under the influence of alcohol and caused a disturbance
7. I was of course only two years old and have only learned this after reading my records. I have no actual memory of how I came to be at Nazareth House. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Life before care

8. As I was only two years old I have very little memory of my family life before I went into care. My first real memory of childhood was driving a pedal controlled bubble car when I was already in Nazareth House.

Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1955 - 1959

9. I remember very little about being in Nazareth House. I was in the nursery for the first two or three years of my stay there. I only remember knocking down a girl in the class when I was pedalling the bubble car I was playing on.
10. The only way I am able to tell you about the early days in Nazareth House is by looking at my records and trying to put together how I ended up there. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I was to have a second spell at Nazareth House between 1961 and 1967 and I have more memories of that period of time.

Leaving Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1959

11. Whilst I was at Nazareth House on the first occasion a lady came and took me [REDACTED] away from the home to live with her at an address at 148 Crown Street, Aberdeen [REDACTED] The woman's name was Rose Middleton.

Foster care with the Middleton's, 148 Crown Street, Aberdeen 1959 - 1961

12.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

13.

14.

15.

Leaving Foster care with the Middletons

16. I cannot be precise but [REDACTED] returned to Nazareth House in 1961. [REDACTED] only supposed to go back to Nazareth House for three weeks while Rose Middleton went to New Zealand. But Rose Middleton never came back.
17. I managed to contact Rose Middleton through one of the sisters in the home. I wrote to her and also received some mail from her. Nazareth House didn't know about this because the letters were addressed to the sister who helped me and were not opened or censored.

Care at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1961 – 1967

18. I returned to Nazareth in 1961. I can be fairly sure of the year because I remember that during the school holidays Nazareth House shut down for a fortnight. It was the summer of 1962 when I was sent to reside with Mr and Mrs Hardie who lived in Troon. I also remember that some of the residents were sent to a retreat home in the north of Scotland.
19. I recall that Nazareth House also had a an old folks home attached to it and the sisters took care of the older people. I remember a Mr [REDACTED] L.J.L. who was one of the residents. He used to play the piano for the older people. He was a great character. Nazareth House in Aberdeen was the largest home run by the Sisters of Nazareth. The old persons home was in a separate area to ours.
20. There were two wings in the home of young people containing boys and girls which were kept very separate. We were not allowed to go into the old folks part through the main gate and were not allowed anywhere near the area for girls. We did meet the older folk occasionally when they were outside smoking. The younger wings had children up to age fifteen which was the school leaving age. I would estimate that there were thirty and fifty members of staff.

21. The top floors were the bedrooms and the showering area. The first floor was the recreation area. I think that there may have been five storeys. I was on the top floor with a glass window in the roof as I can remember the rain battering against it. I thought I was only back at Nazareth House for three weeks but I ended up staying until I was fourteen and a half.
22. The outside area at the side of the building had a huge play area. It also had a netball court and a chicken run where they used to keep live chickens. The grounds also contained our own chapel.
23. The home was built in 1871 and run by the Jesuit order of The Sisters of Nazareth. It was a huge building and I would estimate that there were over a hundred boys and girls. We all had numbers and I was number 4. I can recall my friend at the home, [LCN] who I have spoken to recently was number [REDACTED]. I think that the Inquiry has also interviewed him.
24. [LCN] followed me through our whole life and as well as being in care with him we both joined the Post Office. I have known him most of my life and am still very friendly with him.
25. The home was situated in Claremont Street, Aberdeen and I think that parts of it remain to this day. I think that the area where the girls were housed was called St John's and it was an annexe to the main house. There was a huge play area where the girls and boys were kept apart under the watchful eye of the sisters and in particular Sister [FAF]
26. The only time that you mixed with the opposite sex was when you went to church which was also within the complex. There were a number of sisters and priests who resided at the home. I can recall one of them who must have been about ninety years of age at the time called Father Ashworth. He was very hard of hearing and when he took confession he kept telling you to speak up. It meant that everyone else could hear your confession.

27. After the Second Vatican Council of 1965 things started to change at Nazareth House. The young sisters that were joining the Nazareth order were not tolerating the way that the older sisters treated the children and did not approve of corporal punishment. The Catholic Church could see the need for change and it was reflected in the way the older and younger sisters treated each other. I felt they did not get on. There was a lack of training in dealing with young children by the older sisters. I witnessed many arguments between them including a "cat fight" outside the church between Sister [FAF] and a younger Sister which had to be split up by the Mother Superior.
28. I stayed at Nazareth House till I was fourteen and a half before I returned to Glasgow. [REDACTED]
29. I can remember the Mother Superior was called [LDT] and she did a lot of good things about the school. She would be there between 1963 and 1966. Sister Paul was in charge of the catering. Sister [LFB] was in charge of the boy's wing and Sister [FAF] was in charge of the girls. When we first moved in we had Sister [LDR] as second in charge of the boys. She was known as [LDR]. She was an alcoholic and went over the score with one of the boys. I think what happened was she hurt a boy called [REDACTED]. He needed medical help. The police were contacted by the doctor. [LDR] was moved on as the Order could not cover that up. I know that [REDACTED] is now deceased having been killed while serving in the army. [LDR] was replaced by Sister [LFB]
30. There was also a [REDACTED] called Mr [LJM] who had been a prisoner at the local jail. The rumour was that he had physical relationships with some of the sisters. The sisters used to look after him and provide him with board and lodgings while he worked as a [REDACTED].
31. I think that Sister [LDR] was sent away to a clinic to dry out and then I heard that she had been made a Mother Superior at a place in Middlesbrough. I saw a picture of her as Mother Superior at a convent in Middlesbrough I think that Sister [FAF] second in charge was Sister [LTX]

32. I also remember when Sister [LDT] became Mother Superior she sectioned off the bed areas to give you more privacy. You had a bed and a bedside cabinet and your own space within a small dormitory. Normally there were about twelve boys per dormitory but she changed it to four beds per sectioned off area.
33. Sister [LDT] also made improvements all over the home including installing a lit, converting a gym onto accommodation for the older men, renovating the recreation room and also improving the walkways in the gardens.
34. There were quite a few lay staff who also worked at the home. I can remember one called [LDU] [REDACTED] He was one of the care workers and was involved in a very bad incident with [LCN] [REDACTED], who was one of the pupils that [LDU] beat up. [LDU] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I would estimate his age in 1962 as being about forty. I was sexually assaulted by [LDU] [REDACTED]
35. I also remember another boy who was in the bed opposite me. His number was [REDACTED] and his name was [REDACTED]. I think that [REDACTED] lives in inverness.

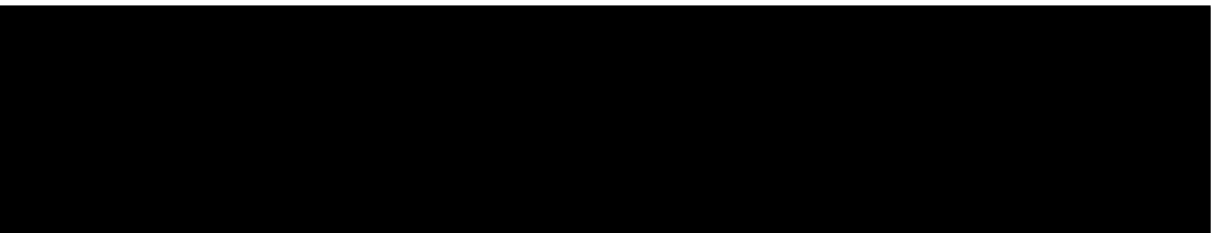
Routine

Mornings and bedtime

36. We would be woken early in the morning to get up and say the rosary. You didn't have to get up early on a Saturday. I can remember that we used to fall asleep in the church when we were saying the rosary. We also had mass every night and more rosary.
37. We would then go to the dining room for breakfast. I think that there were two dining rooms. On a Thursday breakfast consisted of a "piece and grease" which was a sausage and a bit of fried bread. I think we also used to get cereal or porridge.

38. You would then tidy up your bed space and do your cleaning job before you set off for school. I think that this stood us in good stead because some of the boys later joined the army and they were able to make beds, shine shoes and iron shirts which gave them a good start. Your bed space was inspected by the sisters.
39. I remember we had to wear a uniform . We had shorts and a black and yellow jumper which we had to wear to school. My job was to clean the church and I also worked as an altar boy. The nun who supervised me cleaning the church was called Sister LGR and she was very good to me. She used to give me money on my birthday and was very nice to me.
40. After school you would come back to the home and you were able to play before dinner. You would have to attend church. Then you would be sent up to get ready for bed. You would change into your pyjamas and have your supper .Later a hot drink would be brought to your dormitory in an urn. Bed must have been early because you had to be up sharp in the morning. You would be supervised by the sisters when you were getting ready for bed. I also remember that there were drying cupboards near the bedrooms where you would dry off your clothes after they were washed.

41.



Bed-wetting

42. I didn't have this problem but I know that some of the boys did. I remember one of the [REDACTED] brothers had this problem and they used to put a plastic sheet on the bed to try to stop it. I also remember. I think that some of other boys were beaten for wetting the bed but I can't remember which ones.

43. I think that it was Sister LFB that beat him but it might also have been Sister LFD or LDR. The bed wetters usually got a slap and then had to take their sheets away to be washed.

Food

44. The food was terrible and I remember a rhyme we had that summed it up. "I know a funny place not far away, where you get mince and tatties every single day. Ham and eggs you never smell, burnt bacon made in hell, if you want any come to Nazzy house."
45. The food was consistently bad and I recall that the cook was from Spain. I think that her name was Maria Chipolata. She couldn't cook to save herself. The best food was at Easter and Christmas time. It was always cooked by the sisters as we had guests often drop in and they wanted to impress them and encourage more donations. I recall that there were a lot of Italians who had been prisoners of war but had started ice cream businesses in Aberdeen and had become quite prosperous.
46. I remember some of the boys couldn't eat the food and the sisters would force feed them by ramming it down their throats. The food was poor but it was edible. We used to get an orange occasionally and we used to eat the whole thing including the peel.
47. There was an evening meal and you got supper before you went to bed. That was usually hot chocolate and a bun. You were always hungry and there was never enough food.

Discipline

48. The sisters had belts tied round their middle and they would hit you on the legs. They tried to introduce a system of discipline but when the new younger sisters arrived they were not prepared to do this. The sisters would not pick on the older boys because they could fight back. You would get belted for not making up your bed.

There was no formal punishment. They were trying to control 100 children which any mother will tell you is very difficult.

49. We all knew that Sister [LDR] went over the score with one of the boys and we never saw her again. That was how it was.

School

50. The local school we attended was St Peter's in Aberdeen and we would be taken there by bus. We used to go back to the home for lunch. I recall a member of staff called Mrs [LDV] who had mental health problems. I also remember Mrs McKenzie who taught religious instruction.
51. When we would attend the local school I remember that we had to wear a black and yellow blazer which was part of the St Peter's School uniform. We had play clothes for the weekend.
52. I have read my notes and I see that I also attended a school called Summer Street Primary School but I have no recollection of that place.

Religious Instruction

53. You had religion forced on you every day and night apart from a Saturday morning when you had a long lie for an extra hour. You had to say the rosary every morning and attend Mass every night. There was always prayers at night and before each meal. I became an altar boy which was on a rotational basis. I often served at the cathedral in Aberdeen at the Bishop's Palace.
54. The church in the home was also used by the residents of Aberdeen who would come to the home and attend the masses.

Holidays

55. For the first two weeks of August the home shut down and I used to go and live with the Hardie family in Troon. I know that some of the boys who didn't go to one of the families used to go to a place up north but I don't know what it was. I think that some of the old folk also went to a place up in the north of Scotland.

Recreation and leisure time

56. There was plenty of time for recreation and playing with the other boys. There were plenty of toys and some books although they were mainly religious books. You could play football. I can remember being taken to Aberdeen Football Club to watch matches.
57. There was a black and white television and I also had a radio. You couldn't come and go from the home apart from a Saturday when you got your pocket money. You would also be taken to the baths and the ABC Minors Club where you went to the picture show.
58. There was a teacher called Mr McCartney who used to come into Nazareth House at night time with his projector and show you a film. The sisters used to make up bags of sweets. I remember seeing the film Whisky Galore.
59. You would be taken to the local theatre in Aberdeen which was owned by Jimmy Logan. I think that Frankie Vaughan also performed at the theatre and used to help with taking the children there.

Birthdays and Christmas

60. Christmas was always celebrated and there was a tree and lights. You would get a tangerine and a matchbox toy. You had a great Christmas dinner cooked by the sisters. There was always visitors who came to the home and they brought gifts with them. There was someone dressed up as Santa Claus. I didn't like Christmas because I had to get up for midnight mass.

61. Your birthday was always celebrated and the Mother Superior would send you to see Sister Paul and she would give you a cake and biscuits.

Visits/Inspections

62. I can remember visits from the Children's Officer of both Glasgow and Edinburgh. They came on regular visits. I was visited every three months by initially Miss Hamilton and then Mr McEwan. Mr Black came on to the scene later when I was in a home in Glasgow called Lochgarry. He may also have been involved with Nazareth House. All the visits were supervised by the Mother Superior and she was always present so you couldn't say too much.
63. I can't remember getting any visits from my family although the Hardie family from Troon did visit occasionally. I don't think that my mother was allowed to visit. I am aware that my mother had tried to contact me by letter but the sisters wouldn't let her visit. All mail was opened by the sisters and they decided whether to pass it on or not. I didn't see my mother again until I was eighteen years old.
64. I can't recall any inspections while I was there but I would imagine there would have to be some as Glasgow Council were placing us there but the home was in Aberdeen and run by their council.

Medical care

65. You went regularly for a check-up at the doctor's in Alpine Grove, near Queen's Cross in Aberdeen. I think that the doctor's name was Doctor Fraser and he was very good with us. I can't remember being ill so I had little contact with him.
66. Going to the doctors was part of the routine demanded by Glasgow Council and when there was inspections the sisters had to show a certificate from the doctor to say that he had examined you. I think that Glasgow Council had to pay for this service.

67. There was a dental surgery in Nazareth House and a visiting dentist used to call in regularly to examine all the residents. You would be seen by the dentist in the home.
68. In 1964 there was an epidemic breakout of typhoid. A lot of Aberdeen was quarantined. I think the outbreak started in a tin of corned beef. I recall that one of the residents at Nazareth House called [REDACTED] was taken away and I think he had typhoid.

Abuse at Nazareth House 1961 - 1967

69. Sister [LDR] known as [LDR] would regularly beat you with a stick for doing very little. Most of the time she was drunk as I remember one of the boys [REDACTED] used to clean her room and find all the empty gin bottles. She seriously assaulted [REDACTED] He was crying in agony and none of us could sleep. The doctor was called. It was not the usual doctor and he reported the matter to the police. It resulted in Sister [LDR] being sent away for treatment and rehabilitation.
70. [LDR] used to force feed some of the boys if they didn't finish their meal. It never happened to me because I was too fly. I used to feed what I couldn't eat to the dog that lived in the home. The dog was called "Rebel".
71. I recall an incident when Sister [LDR] came into our with her stick long after we had gone to bed. She was determined to punish the boys that had misbehaved that day. She was so drunk that she dropped her stick and a small dog that lived in the home grabbed the stick and ran off. [LDR] tried to catch the dog but was so drunk she just fell over. All the boys knew she was a drunk and an "evil bitch".
72. I recall some boys being beaten for wetting the bed. I think that it was either Sister [LFB], Sister [LFD] or Sister [LDR] or possibly all three. They could all be quite cruel.

73. I witnessed an assault on [LCN]. [LCN] was a resident at the home, he was number []. The man who assaulted him was a member of staff called [LDU]. He set about [LCN] with a stick that was used in washing the clothes. The assault happened in the wash room on the 3rd floor.
74. I don't know the reason for the assault but [LCN] ended up with three weal marks on his face. The incident was reported to Mr [LFA] who was the headmaster of the local school. It was brought to his attention by one of the teachers. He then contacted the police. I was summoned to his office and told the police officers what I had seen.
75. The outcome was that there was a police enquiry and Mr [LDU] disappeared for about a month. I have no idea where he went. He did eventually come back to working at the home. This matter was reported to the police again when we were adults through the solicitor Cameron Fyfe.
76. When we were at St Peter's School we had a form teacher called Mrs [LDV]. She used to belt us with the school belt which was a tawse. For some reason she picked on one of the girls from the home called []. [] was very rebellious and may have had mental health issues.. Mrs [LDV] used to hit her very hard about her legs and we all saw this. It was like warfare. [LDV] used to chase her round the classroom to try to hit her. She was my form teacher at the school.
77. I think that Mrs [LDV] ended being "sectioned" under the Mental Health Act and put into a hospital. I also remember that when [] was in hospital for an unrelated matter she was visited by Mrs [LDV]. On reflection I find this to be quite strange.
78. There was one occasion when six of us were playing football in the yard and we didn't get to the church in time for the rosary. One of the sisters saw us and they

locked all the doors apart from the main door. When we went in the main door the Mother Superior was waiting for us.

79. She made us kneel outside the church facing the wall. As the sisters were going into the church they would cuff us on the ear. They also ground the heel of their shoe into the back of our legs. If we looked round we would get a cuff round the ear. This lasted for about an hour while the mass went on in the church. There were members of the public in the church and the sisters didn't want them to see what was happening. You couldn't report it because it was during the school holidays and there were no teachers to tell.
80. You always got the odd slap from the sisters if you did something wrong. It was just accepted because you probably deserved it. There was no love from the sisters, they didn't give you a kiss or a cuddle. They occasionally used the belt on me.
81. There was sexual abuse going on at Nazareth house. I was subjected to this abuse by the member of staff called [LDU] I was subjected to it for about five years. It involved touching usually during bath time. I have already reported this to Grampian Police and I don't want to discuss it any further. It usually happened in the toilet cubicles when there were no witnesses. I do acknowledge that it happened.
82. I recall one day that I wanted to go to the pictures but I had no money. I said it to one of the other boys but I can't remember who it was. This boy went to [LDU] and the next thing I saw he was handed over a ten shilling note to pay for the pictures. The other boy just said it was for favours provided to [LDU]

Leaving the Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1967.

83. When I reached fourteen and a half I had a decision that I had to make. I could have stayed on at Nazareth House or gone to another home in Glasgow. The home was called Lochgarry and was situated in Cleveden Drive, Glasgow. I wanted out of the

home and so I was left with no choice but to go to Lochgarry. My welfare officer at the time Mr Black organised the move.

**Lochgarry Children's Home, Clevedon Drive, Glasgow 1967 – 1969 and
Lodgings in Glasgow 1969 - 1971**

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

90. When I was over eighteen I was still staying in lodgings at different places in Glasgow. I remained under the care of the Corporation until I was eighteen in 1971.

Reporting abuse

91. In June 1997 I reported the abuse to the police at Bucksburn Police Station in Aberdeen. It came about because [LCN] told me that the BBC did a programme on Nazareth House and the press were also reporting it.
92. I was in Aberdeen and read in a newspaper all about the enquiries being made at Nazareth House. I felt that it could be about [LDU] who had sexually assaulted me and may still be doing this to other children. I spoke to a journalist who gave me the number for the Child Protection Unit at Bucksburn. I called them and arranged to speak to a woman detective there who took my statement. I think that her name was McCarthy.
93. I didn't hear from her for about six months so I phoned her. She said she would make some enquiries and called me back an hour later. She told me that [LDU] must be dead now and there was very little they could do.
94. On the 1st July 1999 I made a further report to Strathclyde Police regarding the abuse I had suffered in Nazareth House. The officers concerned were DC Amanda Black and DS Thomas Docherty. I think that they took a statement and then passed on all the details to Grampian Police where the offences took place. The statement concerned the issue with Archbishop Mario Conti and the confessional. About 1967 I told Archbishop Conti who was a priest at the time in St Mary's Cathedral, Aberdeen about the abuse in Nazareth House. Conti later denied in the press that

he was aware of any abuse at Nazareth House. He cited that he was unable to discuss what had been said in a confessional box.

95. The same day that I made the statement to Strathclyde Police I also went with the officers to Cameron Fyfe's Office and made a further statement to M Fyfe.

96. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We all adjourned to the local pub and it was there while speaking to the other survivors from INCAS that I was told that [REDACTED] LDU had only died a few weeks ago and some of the survivors had been to his funeral. The police had not told me the truth.

97. I was then interviewed by some of the Aberdeen papers and the BBC journalist Eric Crockart who did a big spread on my experiences with Nazareth House and the Grampian Police. I was filmed for the BBC and appeared on television.

98. The police then came to see me in Glasgow and apologised. I think that the officer was called Detective Inspector Thorburn and his associate was a female officer. They told me that they were now Grampian Police and a lot of the records had been destroyed and the case was now time barred. They apologise to me over what had happened and the lack of police action at the time that [REDACTED] LDU was still alive

99. I think that when I reported the abuse to the police in 1997 [REDACTED] LDU was working in some capacity in the law courts at Lodge Walk in Aberdeen and must have been known to the local police.

100. Around the same time I also reported what had happened to me to Cameron Fyfe who was a lawyer working for Ross Harper solicitors and who was taking on a case against Nazareth House. I think that the legal firm took on the case on a "no win no fee" basis but they eventually ran out of money.

101. In 2006 I was awarded £2,500 when I appeared at a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board Inquiry. I was represented by Cameron Fyfe's legal firm. I remember that initially I was knocked back but Cameron Fyfe appealed the decision and we were awarded the money.

Life after care

102. I spent most of my working life in the post office in Glasgow although I also worked on the buses in Glasgow and Aberdeen.
103. I never got married but I have two children [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They both live in England and are in their 30's. I have two grandchildren. I found settling down with my partner too difficult. She now lives in the south of France.

104.

105.

[REDACTED] When I was eighteen I had one more visit to my mother who was living in Blairgowrie. I was advised by the Child Officer not to go. When I got there I saw that my mother was still an alcoholic and living a very sad life. I didn't go back to see her [REDACTED]

Impact

106. I think that I am more independent than most other people. That may not be a bad thing but I have never been able to live with my partners although I could look after the children. I value my independence and living together is not possible.

107. In February 2002 one of the ex-residents at Nazareth House [REDACTED] committed suicide [REDACTED]. It was during the publicity about Nazareth House in the press. Such was the impact of Nazareth House.
108. There was a while when I was active in trying to get the Catholic church to acknowledge what went on in Nazareth House. But I have since given up trying because of the "time-bar" on reporting the abuse. I think a lot of the ex-residents have given up. I thought there was some hope when Jack McConnell stood up and apologised in the Scottish parliament. Nothing has really happened since and I don't think too much about Nazareth House now.
109. I learned to deal with my issues by going to the pub having a few drinks, listening to some good music and then crashing out in bed. I have received counselling over the years but not for stuff related to Nazareth House.

Records

110. Cameron Fyfe the solicitor helped me in recovering my records and discovering what had happened to me. They were redacted but it helped to piece together some of the missing parts of my life. There are also copies of letters that my mother wrote to the Child Protection Office in Glasgow.

Other information

111. When I was at Nazareth House I wrote some letters to God which I hid in recesses in the home. I hid them in cupboards and in 1999 I went back and recovered them. The notes were about the abuse I was suffering and they were still there 33 years later. I remembered about them in later life and through my lawyers and the lawyers for Nazareth House a firm called Stronachs I arranged to go to Nazareth house and recover the letters. They were exactly where I had put them despite the changes that

had been made to the building at Nazareth House. There were a lot of conditions in getting them back including no press involvement.

112. Bishop Conti of Glasgow learned about these letters and "rubbished" them in the press accusing me and the other survivors of being gold diggers and trying to get money out of the catholic church. I was a young boy when I wrote these letters and they were personal letters. I had to written to God about what was happening to me.

113. 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.....

LBV

Dated.....

FRI 27TH OCT 2017