

Sr Ann Marie Ryan,
Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge,
St Mary's
Beechlawn,
Drumcondra,
Dublin 9.

14th April, 2003.

Dear Sr. Ryan,

I am currently writing an article for the Irish Times on matters relating to the record of your order in the running of both the industrial school and the Magdalen laundry at High Park. I am particularly focussing on the exhumations of Magdalen women from St Mary's burial ground on the convent grounds in 1993.

I enclose, as requested by your representative who returned my call to you last Friday, a list of questions which I have relating to these matters. I would be most grateful for a response at your earliest convenience, and would appreciate if you could email me this at [REDACTED]. Should you be unable to email, perhaps you could phone me on [REDACTED], and we could arrange an alternative.

With thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Raftery.

Questions for Sister Ann Marie Ryan, Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge, High Park, Drumcondra.

1. Why did the exhumation of the Magdalen women buried in St Mary's graveyard, High Park, take place?
2. It was reported at the time that your order had invested in GPA shares, and had lost a substantial sum on money as a result of the collapse of that company – was there a connection between this and the sale of your lands, with the resulting exhumation?
3. Why did you decide to cremate the remains?
4. Were/are you aware of Canon Law 1176 in this regard – that while not forbidding cremation, the Catholic Church “earnestly recommends” burial of remains? Do you have any comment on your decision to cremate in the context of this Church law?
5. On the list of those buried in St Mary's graveyard, which you provided to the Department of Environment as part of your application for an exhumation licence, there were 34 names with no death certificates (Appendix 2): why were so many deaths not registered? How did it happen that no cause of death was supplied for these women? Were they attended by a doctor in their last illnesses? Did a doctor certify as to cause of death? Do you have any comment on the fact that it is an offence to fail to register any death which occurs/occurred on your premises?
6. On Appendix 3 of the same list, there were 23 women for whom you had only their “quasi-religious” names: how did it arise that your order was not aware of the first and last names of these individuals? Why were these deaths not certified and registered? Can you explain some confusion here with dates – e.g. on Appendix 3 there appear to be three Magdalen women who died in 1968, but there is only one 1968 death listed on the gravestone for the women in Glasnevin Cemetery.
7. How do you explain the discrepancies between the list provided to the Dept Environment and the names listed on the gravestone in Glasnevin Cemetery –
 - e.g. of 155 names and dates on the Glasnevin gravestone, only 27 correlate with the names and dates given to the Department;
 - e.g. of the 133 names given to the Department, 86 of them do not appear on the gravestone – where are these 86 women buried? Were their remains exhumed from St Mary's, as specified to the Department? Were they among the exhumed remains that were cremated? If buried in the Glasnevin plot, why do their names not appear on the gravestone? Finally, if they are buried elsewhere than Glasnevin Cemetery, was the Department of the Environment informed of this (questions 10 and 11 of Application for Exhumation Licence form)?
8. Can you provide an explanation for the following examples:
 - a) Bridget [REDACTED] (died 18/4/87), listed on Appendix 1 (those for whom you did have death certs), but in fact no death registration can now be found, and her name is not on the Glasnevin gravestone. Where is Bridget [REDACTED] now buried? Was she exhumed from St Mary's (as per your list)? Why is her death not registered?
 - b) Margaret [REDACTED] (died 7/6/73), listed on Appendix 2, death not registered, not on gravestone. Where is Margaret [REDACTED] now buried? Was she exhumed from St Mary's (as per your list)? Why is her death not registered?
 - c) Mary [REDACTED] (died 12/3/75), listed on Appendix 2 has having no death cert, but death was registered. However, her name is not on the Glasnevin gravestone. Where is Mary [REDACTED] buried? Was she exhumed from St Mary's? Were her remains cremated? If buried elsewhere, how did this occur?
 - d) Listed on Appendix 1, but not on gravestone: Julia [REDACTED] (d.1974), Edith [REDACTED] (d.1975), Christina [REDACTED] (d.1979), Lucy [REDACTED] (d.1980), Mary [REDACTED] (d.1981), Kate [REDACTED] (d.1983), Mary [REDACTED] (d.1985) – where are they buried? Were they exhumed and cremated, as specified to the Department?
 - e) A total of 88 women for the period in question (up to 1987) are named on the Glasnevin gravestone but do not appear on the schedule of names attached to the Exhumation Licence for St Mary's. Were these women also buried and exhumed from St Mary's? If buried separately, were they also cremated? Some of these women died as recently as the 1960s: e.g. Margaret [REDACTED] (d. 21/3/1967), Annie [REDACTED] (d. 5/8/67), Brigid [REDACTED] (d. 13/10/68).

- f) What about Edith [REDACTED] (d. 16/3/1972), not on Dept Env list, but an additional hand-written list, and on the Glasnevin gravestone? What about Annie [REDACTED] (d. 11/9/72), on the same additional list, but not on the gravestone?
9. Can you explain why an additional exhumation licence was applied for after the exhumation work had already begun? With regard to the additional remains discovered, can you confirm that there was a total of 22? Can you further confirm that your best information at the time indicated that these additional 22 women had died as recently as the 1960s and 1970s?
 10. How much did the exhumation, cremation and re-burial cost? Did you pay it all? Did the purchaser of land pay any of it?
 11. Did you make any contact with the relatives of the deceased women in the graveyard? Did any relatives remove any remains for separate burial?
 12. On the application form for exhumation, how did Sister Anne Marie Ryan (the applicant) describe her "relationship or connection with the deceased" (question no. 8 on the form)? What was the explanation provided as to why the application was not being made by the nearest relative?
 13. When was St Mary's last used as a burial ground? Was it still in use during the period from 1987 to 1993?
 14. Do you have any regrets about the exhumations of the Magdalen women; do you have any regrets about their cremation?
 15. When did High Park laundry close down? How many former High Park laundry workers are still living in Beechlawn?
 16. Some former inmates of Magdalen laundries have asked the nuns in charge to issued an apology for the way they treated the women? Have you yourselves done so? Do you feel that this is appropriate or warranted?
 17. With regard to St Joseph's Industrial School, High Park, how do you react to accounts of former inmates who allege physical and emotional abuse and neglect, perpetrated by some of the nuns working in the school?
 18. Many religious orders have already apologised for their role in the industrial schools. Has your order done so? Do you feel that this is either appropriate or warranted?
 19. Are there any additional points you would like to make in relation to the above issues?