

***Mother and Baby Home Report issued on January 12th,
2021. Response of Bishop Fintan Monahan issued on
January 13th, 2021***

Welcoming the Report

I welcome the Report of the Commission of the Mother and Baby Home that was published on the 12th of January 2021. I hope the publication of the report will be of some help to the survivors of the many institutions involved and that in revealing the truth it will begin a process of healing. Many thanks to all who contributed to the huge work of the Commission, those who facilitated the process and all who participated in the process.

Initial Response

My response to the Report on the Mother and Babies Homes is one of sorrow, sadness, shame and deep regret.

The report is thousands of pages in length. I have read as much of it as time has permitted to date and will continue to read, engage with and reflect on the content of the report along with associated analysis. It will take some time to process and reflect on its entirety and all its implications.

Killaloe Involvement

There were two Mother and Baby Homes in the Diocese of Killaloe: Sean Ross Abbey in Roscrea (1931-1969) and another home in Kilrush, The County Clare Nursery (1922-1932). Both came under the scrutiny of the Report and are not exempt from severe criticism in the findings of the Report.

The Report

The Report gives an opportunity to listen, first-hand to the experience and stories of the many survivors and reflect with them on the painful memories that are so real. It is clear that in the recent past many single mothers and their children were treated unfairly, unjustly and harshly in those Homes. The pain,

described so often in the report of a mother being separated from her home, family and baby is unimaginable.

I am aware that mothers and their children have carried a legacy of pain from their experience in these homes. So many have struggled to have a sense of identity as a result of that experience. I would like to think that this Report will go some way to giving them the recognition they so rightly feel is their due. I say to them: “You are our sisters and brothers and you were let down by the Church and State .”

Apology

As bishop of Killaloe, I humbly say sorry to all who suffered as outlined in the Report. For the degradation caused, I am sorry; for the suffering inflicted, I am sorry; for the failure of the Church to demonstrate its commitment to the sacredness of human life, I am truly sorry.

Sorry is a small word that may seem inadequate in the light of all that is attempting to address. I can only say that it comes from my heart.

A Judgmental Church

It is clear that in the recent past that single mothers and their children were treated unfairly, unjustly and harshly by the Catholic Church that was supposed to be merciful, compassionate and caring. This mistreatment arose to a great extent from a strict moral code that mostly was imposed very one-sidedly. Single mothers and their children bore the brunt of that one-sided approach and suffered greatly as a result.

Mother and Baby Homes

Until very recent times, Mother and Baby Homes were wrongly seen as a necessary means of dealing with what was seen as a problem in the eyes of a patriarchal Church and Society. Unfortunately, this judgmental climate led to these Homes being unhappy places where as the Report states “various cruel

treatments were meted out to mothers”. I know that mothers and their children have carried a legacy of pain from their experience in these Homes.

A Plea for Forgiveness

As Church in the true Christian tradition of repentance we acknowledges our wrongdoing, accept it and ask for forgiveness.

It is a bitter irony and cause of great shame that a Church which valued the sacredness of all human life and saw all its members as equal in God’s eyes, failed to show an equal love to all the children of God’s Family – single mothers and their children.

Equally, the single mother did not receive the compassion and love that the Church professed to show all people. We now clearly see that single mothers should not have been treated in such a manner. I accept that the Church which judged them so harshly is shamed by its actions. That shame is a legacy handed down to our Church today.

My hope is that we, as Church and Society have learnt much from the hard lessons of the past in relation to *Safeguarding* and now the *Mother and Baby Home Report*. As a consequence of the enormity of this sadness and suffering it will make the Church and Society of our day a better, safer place. I would hope that our Church as a result of this will be more open to listen to the voices of women and men, but particularly women. A Church that will be more inclusive, to make it a more truly Christian environment for all to live and thrive, especially the most vulnerable in our communities. As an outcome of this report, I commit to ongoing dialogue with and working alongside survivors to achieve justice and healing.

If anyone affected by any issues arising from the report would like to meet with myself or any Church personnel you are welcome to make contact through the diocesan Office in Ennis. Counselling and support details from the Commission website are available below.

Ends

Counselling Service for Former Residents of Mother and Baby Homes

The National Counselling Service (NCS) was asked to provide counselling to former residents through its counselling locations:

- The HSE's NCS has 20 years of experience in providing counselling and psychotherapy to a wide range of clients including those who have experienced psychological difficulties due to time spent in institutions.
- Counselling is available face to face, by telephone or online through secure video.

This service is available to adults living in Ireland if you are a former resident of Mother and Baby Homes (mothers or children).

How you can access this service – Referral Process

Access to the National Counselling Service for former residents may be made by direct self-referral. You can do this by referring yourself to the service that is nearest to you.

We will also accept written referrals from health care professionals such as GPs.

Individuals referred will be offered an initial assessment appointment. This to establish if the NCS is the appropriate service to meet a person's needs at this time.

If counselling is appropriate the next available counselling place will be offered.

When making a referral to the NCS it would be helpful to identify if you are a former resident of a mother and baby home.

This will ensure you are prioritised for the next available counselling place.

Contact Details

You can find out about your nearest counselling service by contacting the HSE region which looks after your county.

[Please see our full list of contact details here.](#)

Outside of office hours

Anonymous telephone support is available from [Connect Counselling](#), a HSE funded service. Freephone [1800 477 477](#) from 6pm to 10pm every day (7 days a week).

Other Support Options

Visit yourmentalhealth.ie for more mental health support options including phone, text and online
