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BROTHER ACCUSED OF ABUSE WAS LEFT IN AFRICA

St John of God allowed missionary to continue working with children as allegations mounted

By **Michael O'Farrell**
INVESTIGATIONS EDITOR

THE St John of God order covered up 20 child abuse allegations against a school principal and allowed him to work and live with vulnerable children in Africa for decades – even as payouts were made to his Irish accusers.

Brother Aidan Clohessy was principal of St Augustine's in Blackrock in south Dublin – a school

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ACCUSED:
Brother Aidan Clohessy in Dublin recently

The IRISH Mail

ON SUNDAY

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

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Street children

St John of God staff were kept in dark over abuse claims facing brother

By Michael O'Farrell

IN AFRICA

NOBODY told Charles Masulani that in the past 30 years Brother Aidan Clohessy had been accused of multiple counts of child abuse in Ireland.

As director of St John of God's (SJOG) services in Malawi, Mr Masulani might have expected to know – especially since he still consults with Brother Aidan almost on a weekly basis.

But he knew nothing.

In all, SJOG in Dublin has received 20 allegations against Brother Aidan relating to a

They are so secretive. They act like the mafia!

period before he relocated to Malawi in 1993.

But no one in Malawi, it seems, ever knew that there may have been cause to worry about Brother Aidan's contact with children.

On Tuesday morning – after the Irish Mail on Sunday informed the SJOG Order in Dublin about today's story – a panicked Mr Masulani arrived into the offices of Collins Mtika, the director of the Centre for Investigative Journalism in Malawi.

In October the centre had helped the MoS as we tracked Brother Aidan's activities in Malawi and spoke to children with whom he had come into contact.

Now Mr Masulani was astonished at what he was beginning to hear from Dublin.

'You know these people are so secretive. They act like a mafia,' he exclaimed, adding that he spoke to Brother Aidan frequently but had never been told anything like this.

Mr Masulani was not alone in his ignorance.

Harrison Chilale was clinical director for St John of God's services in Malawi from the very beginning in 1993 until he retired in 2015. He too knew nothing of the mount-

ing allegations against Brother Aidan in Ireland. Had he known he might have questioned the manner in which Brother Aidan began to house street children at his home.

'I knew he kept children – I think up to 10 sometimes under one roof,' he recalled.

'There were a group of children he was keeping there.'

'They would stay at the Brother's house. I think Brother Aidan had some space where they would eat, wash and clean themselves up.'

That space according to Maxwell Chirwa – Brother Aidan's long-standing personal cook – was a converted garage next to Brother Aidan's house.

'There was a place where Brother Aidan was keeping them,' he said.

CLAIMS: Brother Aidan Clohessy housed up to 10 street children in his home



STREET CHILDREN PICKED UP



BOYS BROUGHT TO COMPOUND



ST. JOHN OF GOD HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY

'Built at the back where the garage was. He put some rooms inside. They put the beds there. Some of

Made sure we cleaned ourselves thoroughly!

them had no father, no mother so he kept them there.'

The MoS tracked down half a

dozen former street children who either lived in this accommodation or frequented Brother Aidan's home.

The MoS has decided to protect the identities of the former street children by not naming the people who spoke. They explained that Brother Aidan used to supervise their shower routine.

'Brother Aidan used to come and collect about 15 of us and bring us to his house. He had a pickup with a

canopy. He forced us to take a bath,' one former street child alleged.

In contrast to these allegations some of the boys spoke in positive terms about Brother Aidan, although they all spoke about taking baths at Brother Aidan's home.

'He took us from the street when I was 12,' said one.

'He took us to his house where he was staying near the Bishop. He was a very good man because he was like a father to us. We grew up with him for maybe 12 years. We

Order told garda of complaint 27 years after the event

THE St John of God order told a statutory inquiry into child abuse that it had received no complaints of abuse until 1996 – although a complaint against Brother Aidan Clohessy had been received a decade earlier.

The order received its first complaint against Brother Aidan in 1985 and sent him to Africa in 1993. The order did not inform

gardai of this complaint until 2012, the year Br Aidan was withdrawn from public service in Malawi.

Testifying before the Ryan Commission into clerical child abuse in 2004, then head of the order – the late Brother Fintan Whitmore – said no complaints had been received against anyone until 1996. At the time of this sworn testimony, Brother Aidan

had spent 11 years in Malawi and was facing 10 sets of abuse claims. In 1997 he had been instructed by Brother Whitmore to have no contact with children.

St John of God has previously, and again this week, refused to explain why or how the Ryan Commission was misled in this fashion. Brother Whitmore also told the commission that he could

find no evidence on file to suggest any abuse had taken place within the order's services.

He also said that despite no evidence of abuse the order had agreed to pay €1m to the Redress Board since the indemnity received in return was 'an attractive proposition'.

Since then it has emerged that members of the St John of God

order's Western European Province have been the subject of 97 abuse claims involving 24 brothers.

Five of these brothers are still alive, of whom Brother Aidan is the subject of the most complaints. Despite Garda investigations, no arrests have been made and no prosecutions have been initiated in these cases.

Stayed at home

BATHROOM WHERE THEY SHOWERED



Five decades of service X up to 22 abuse claims

1970 Brother Aidan Clohessy becomes principal of St Augustine's.

1985 The St John of God (SJOG) Order receives the first complaint of abuse against Brother Aidan. It is dismissed internally. The order does not inform gardai.

1988 The 1988 Childcare Bill is published, prompting SJOG to establish a committee to draft procedures for managing allegations of sexual abuse. Then HR director John Pepper heads up this committee.

1991 The committee publishes guidelines stating that children must be protected from abuse and that anyone accused of abuse must be removed from children.

1993 Brother Aidan is sent on a new mission to Mzuzu, a remote city in northern Malawi, where he houses street children at his home.

1997 A second abuse allegation is received about Brother Aidan in Ireland - this time via a statement by an alleged victim to gardai. He is instructed not to work with children, but continues to do so.

1988 As a third abuse allegation is received in Ireland, SJOG inform the then Eastern Health Board that Brother Aidan is 'no longer involved in services to children'. He continues living and working with children.

1999 Three further sets of allegations are received against Brother Aidan in Ireland. SJOG publishes revised guidelines which refer to the particularly vulnerable position of those in the order's care.

2002 The Redress Board is established and SJOG contributes €1m, securing indemnity from any cases settled through the board. Brother Aidan continues living and working with children in Africa even as payouts are made to his Irish accusers.

2003 Allegations against Brother Aidan now number 10. His order writes to him to tell him 'not to have direct contact responsibility for programmes attended by children'. He continues living and working with children.



MISSION: Brother Aidan Clohessy was sent to Malawi in 1993

2004 SJOG misinform the Ryan Commission into clerical child abuse saying their first abuse case appeared in 1996 after Brother Aidan left for Africa. In fact a complaint had been made against Brother Aidan in 1985 - before he went to Malawi.

2011 As the number of allegations against Brother Aidan reaches 14, his order conducts a risk assessment which recommends 'therapeutic input' for Brother Aidan. The review concludes he is of low risk of sexual abuse given that 'he is not in a position of authority over children'. But Brother Aidan remains unsupervised in Malawi.

2012 Amid a new Garda investigation Brother Aidan is withdrawn from public ministry and returns to Ireland. It appears no one in Malawi is told why he has suddenly left and no effort appears to have been made to establish whether any children may have been put in danger during his time in Africa. SJOG inform gardai of the original 1985 allegation against Brother Aidan - 27 years late.

2013 The order receives three further sets of allegations and a canonical inquiry into Brother Aidan is commenced.

2014 Three more sets of allegations are received, bringing to 20 the number of alleged victims who claim to have been abused by Brother Aidan.

2017 An investigation by the Irish Mail on Sunday finds two former pupils who allege they were abused by Brother Aidan at St Augustine's, bringing to 22 the number of potential victims of abuse. SJOG send the allegations to gardai when presented with them by this newspaper this week.

BOSSSES MADE REGULAR TRIPS

ST JOHN of God's mission in Malawi was regularly visited by Irish SJOG officials. In 2010 Irish Provincial Brother Donatus Forkan, pictured far left, joined Br Aidan, centre, when an extension to a college of health sciences was opened. Br Aidan was quietly withdrawn from Malawi in 2012 but returned for a 2013 conference with Br Donatus, and then CEO John Pepper.



used to go there and spend our time in his house... He used to teach us so many things. It was a good house.'

All of the former street children the MoS met spoke of a familiar washing routine which Br Aidan allegedly supervised.

'He took us to his house and then we had a shower and then he gave us some food... that's how I met Brother Aidan,' said one former street child.

This person was a client of a St John of God drop-in centre for street children called the Umoza Children's Project where washing facilities were provided.

However, he alleges that Brother Aidan would collect boys from the centre during his lunch break and bring them to his home to wash.

'Each and every time when he wants us then he was finding us

there [in the Umoza centre]. Especially during the lunch hour, he was taking us to his house and doing the same thing. He was giving us new clothes. He was doing this maybe three times a week.'

Suddenly in 2012 Br Aidan disappeared almost overnight without

He was a very good man, like a father to us

explanation for his departure. There were no goodbyes or farewell parties despite the fact that Brother Aidan had almost single-handedly built everything from scratch in Malawi and was widely known as the face of his order.

And even now, neither Brother Aidan's name nor photograph is featured anywhere on the order's website, even though he founded its mission in Malawi.

'We had a culture of organising parties for people who are going to go and Aidan used to do that. Why can't we do a party for him?' asked former clinical director Harrison Chilale.

The answer appears to be that Brother Aidan had been withdrawn from public ministry because of child protection concerns and is now the subject of a canonical inquiry.

But no one in Malawi appears to have been told this.

■ *The Centre for Investigative Journalism in Malawi - <http://investigative-malawi.com> - assisted the MoS during our inquiries in Africa.*



The men who live with the legacy of abuse and Born with polio and condemned to a life of abuse

By Michael O'Farrell

CON CARROLL knows about injustice. That's why you'll find him to the fore of any given protest march in support of the oppressed as it snakes past the GPO.

Con, with his distinctive half body limp and determined stutter, is a familiar sight in Dublin's city centre.

Like the drug users and homeless addicts who salute him on a first-name basis as he shuffles down Henry Street to his favourite café for a slice of cream cake, Con has had it tough.

But he's not a victim. 'I hate the word "victim", he says. 'I'm a survivor, not a victim.'

Against odds that would have floored most, Con had things stacked against him from the moment he was born into care with polio, on March 23, 1964, at Seán Ross Abbey Roscrea, Co. Tipperary.

The condition left half his body drooped to one side, almost as if he were created specially to shoulder sideways into the onslaught of cruelty and challenges he would face. Because he was an orphan, Con was sent to St Augustine's in Blackrock in south Dublin – a school for intellectually disabled boys run by the St John of God order – at the age of 12 in the summer of 1975.

With his stutter and limp, it was assumed Con was stupid. He was written off from the start. No one told him he had a sister.

But there was nothing wrong with Con mentally or intellectually. Nothing wrong, that is, until he began to be neglected and abused first by nuns in a midlands institution and then – allegedly – at St Augustine's.

It was in St Augustine's that Con met Brother Aidan Clohessy. There is no dispute about that.

But after that there are two versions of this story. Brother Aidan's version is simple. He has always denied abusing any of the pupils at his school. That's another way of

saying Con is lying when he recalls an ill-tempered man who would 'put down' and 'mimic' the boys in his care.

But Con swears it's the truth – just as he swears he was sexually abused by Brother Aidan. 'I was regularly sent to Brother Aidan's office for punishment and he sexu-

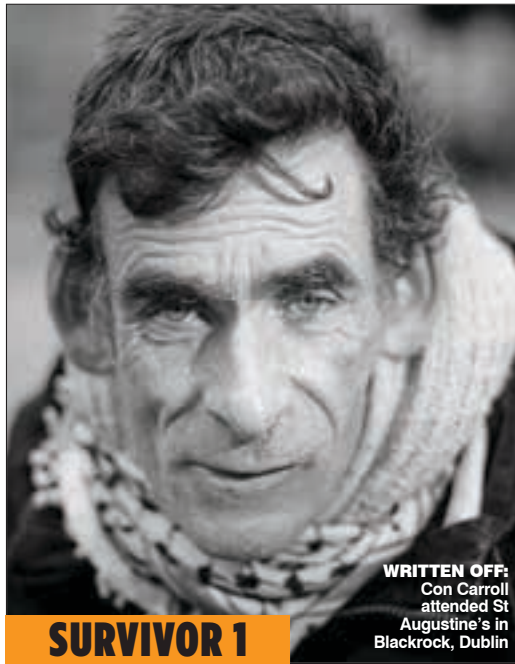
ally abused me there... Sometimes he touched my penis and testicles and rubbed me.'

That's what Con told the gardai when he complained in 2001. 'Brother Aidan would come into the boys' shower room and stand watching and ridiculing us... sometimes he physically abused the boys,

especially those who wet the bed.' Con took to alcohol and drugs while at St Augustine's.

'I would take these things to get out of my head and to get my mind away from the things that were going on around me,' he says

In the end, it was Con's word against Brother Aidan's and the



WRITTEN OFF:
Con Carroll
attended St
Augustine's in
Blackrock, Dublin

SURVIVOR 1

My life was ruined by attending that school

SURVIVOR 2

AGE: 63. Sent to St Augustine's aged eight.

HIS STORY: Brother Aidan allegedly took his trousers down to beat him violently. He was later sent to another St John of God institution as punishment and because of this missed out on an education.

HE SAYS: 'I should have been in school but they wouldn't teach me. I just worked in the workshop. My biggest regret is that I didn't get an education.'

SURVIVOR 3

AGE: 57. Sent to St Augustine's aged 11 with his younger brother (Survivor 4).

HIS STORY: Was allegedly sexually abused by Brother Aidan in the early 1970s in the principal's office and in the priory at St Augustine's. Was also abused by others at the school.

HE SAYS: 'My life was ruined by St Augustine's. I am a heavy drinker and do not have anywhere to live. I sleep on a relative's couch. Like my brother, I have tried to kill myself. The way I control it is drink. I don't think I could ever give up. It keeps you together.'

SURVIVOR 4

AGE: 56. Sent to St Augustine's aged 10 with his older brother (Survivor 3).

HIS STORY: Brother Aidan did things to me that I can't talk about. Was also abused by others.

HE SAYS: 'My marriage broke down. I have never told my wife or children about what happened to me in St Augustine's. What happened to me ruined my life. I became suicidal. I tried three times. I have the scars from that on my wrists. Once I jumped off Bray Bridge.'

DPP decided that the alleged events had happened too long ago to prosecute. Nevertheless, Con went before the Redress Board and his case was heard. But the law prevents Con or anyone else from disclosing the outcome.

Aged 18, Con was sent to work in a St John of God nursing home in Bray. But it wasn't long before he sank to the very bottom. Homeless and a heroin addict, he did what he had to do to score a fix. He lives with the lasting health consequences of that today. And at night-time he still has nightmares that bring him back to St Augustine's.

But he survived, sobered up and today is heavily involved in helping others in the community. He's even travelled the world – exploring Brazil and other exotic locations on his own, making up for lost time.

Just last year, Con discovered he had a sister living in New York. Having lived his entire life as an orphan, he spent his Christmas in the US with a family that he never knew about.

One injustice righted. But many more remain.

How order ignored its own guidelines on abuse

CONFIDENTIAL files obtained by the Irish Mail on Sunday reveal how the St John of God order responded internally to a growing awareness of the issue of child abuse from the 1980s onwards.

When the first complaint about Brother Aidan Clohessy was received in 1985, the order, like many religious groups, had no formal child protection policy.

But after that complaint – and in the wake of the 1988 Childcare Bill being formulated – the order set up an internal committee to

draft procedures for the investigation and management of abuse claims.

The MoS has seen minutes from the committee's meetings showing that 'the situation' at St Augustine's was discussed and that Brother Aidan contributed. The legal implications for the order were 'of paramount importance', the minutes noted.

In 1991 the committee, under the chairmanship of then HR director (later CEO) John Pepper, drew up the order's first

guidelines. Section 4.4 of the code stated that an alleged abuser should be suspended or assigned duties that 'remove him from other children or clients' pending an investigation.

These guidelines were reviewed in 1993 – the year Brother Aidan was sent to Malawi – and new guidelines were introduced in 1995. They did not deviate substantially from the initial rules.

Meanwhile, in an apparent breach of the guidelines, Brother Aidan was in Malawi with no

apparent restrictions on his access to children.

By 1999, as further claims mounted about Brother Aidan, Mr Pepper's group published a new set of guidelines, noting that 'those in the order's services are in a particularly vulnerable position and are dependent on order personnel to provide the highest quality care'.

■ Towards Healing provides free therapeutic services for victims of clerical abuse. Tel: 1800 303 416.

the man who denies inflicting a lifetime of pain



ACCUSED: Brother Aidan Clohessy in Dublin recently

Nobody is guilty until they're proved guilty

THE Irish Mail on Sunday confronted Brother Aidan Clohessy before Christmas to confirm he was the individual referred to as Brother D in an audit of child abuse cases at St John of God.

Brother D was by far the most prolific alleged abuser of all St John of God order members in Ireland.

The MoS knew from painstaking research that Brother D was Brother Aidan, but for legal and ethical reasons we offered him an opportunity to respond.

'You are Brother D. I don't need to beat about the bush when I say that. You know who I mean by Brother D,' this reporter told him.

There was a brief pause – and then he answered.

'Yes, yes, I know, yeah.' But Brother Aidan didn't really want to talk about the 20 allegations of child sexual abuse he has faced in the past three decades.

Asked about the allegations against him, Brother Aidan said: 'As I denied it all in the past, I'll deny it again. It's not... It didn't happen. All of those have been fully investigated by the police and there's no charges of any kind. I don't think anybody is guilty until they're proved guilty... Innocent until proven guilty.'

Brother Aidan also denied collecting street children

and bringing them to his home in Malawi as the MoS had been told repeatedly when staff travelled to Africa to investigate his activities there. 'I didn't pick anybody off the streets in Malawi. We have a programme to provide for people who needed help,' he said.

Some of those who made allegations against Brother Aidan in Ireland got financial settlements from the Redress Board but he declined to comment about this when asked. 'I don't know,' he replied. 'I wouldn't know about the settlements.'

In fairness, he may not have: they happened when he was in Malawi.

How MoS put a face to alleged prolific abuser

THE key to unlocking the truth about this scandal came in the form of a 2015 audit compiled by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The audit reviewed how the St John of God order had handled child abuse claims – and chronicled all allegations against the five still-living members of the order.

The identity of these accused clergy was protected but one alleged abuser – referred to as Brother D – stood out because of the sheer number of allegations against him over a 30-year period.

The audit stated that the first allegation against Brother D was made in 1985 – but had not been reported to gardai until 2012.

Why the delay? Why did the order misinform the 2004 Ryan Commission into child abuse that it had not received any complaints until 1996? What might the order be trying to hide?

1 OF the five living members of the St John of God order who have been subject to child sexual abuse claims one particular member has been named by a significant number of complainants over a number of years.

At the time of the audit there were only 19 living members of the order left alive in Ireland. Brother D had to be one of these.

2 ALL allegations received refer to a time period before 1993.

All of these men had embarked on frequent and sometimes lengthy missions abroad, so tracing their

1 Of the five living members who have been subject to child sexual abuse allegations one particular member has been named by a significant number of complainants over a number of years.

2 All allegations received refer to a time period before 1993.

3 Brother D is now out of public ministry since 2012, and is complying with a Covenant of Support and the canonical investigation is in process.

4 The reviewers note that while the Provincial in 1997 advised that Brother D should have no contact with children, he remained in a prominent role with responsibility over a service that included children's services.

STEP BY STEP: A 2015 audit contained clues on identity of Brother D

careers and matching details with clues in the audit was a tough task. But slowly one candidate emerged, Brother Aidan Clohessy, the one-time principal of special needs school St Augustine's who had left Ireland for Malawi in 1993. That date was telling: according to the audit, all 20 allegations against Brother D related to a period before 1993.

3 BROTHER D has been out of public ministry since 2012, and is complying with a Covenant of Support and the canonical investigation is in process.

There is another crucial date in the audit: 2012, the year Brother D was withdrawn from public ministry. That too matched with the sudden and unexplained departure of Brother Aidan from Malawi. Added to this when the details of the four other living brothers were examined, the lack of multiple historical allegations against them stood out. According to the audit, Brother D was the only living brother who faced more than one allegation of abuse. We began the lengthy task of tracing former pupils of St Augustine's who had been there during Brother Aidan's

time as principal. Beyond that, we needed to narrow these down to any who may have actually made complaints against Brother Aidan. In the end we found six former pupils who had made allegations of abuse against Brother Aidan. Three agreed to have their story told anonymously – though their details were provided to the order – and one agreed to be named in our coverage. Brother D was Brother Aidan for sure – as he would confirm months later when we finally confronted him in person.

4 while the Provincial advised in 1997 that Brother D should have no contact with children, he remained in a prominent role with responsibility over a service that included children's services. The audit points out that the 1997 suggestion that Brother D did not have contact with children did not tally with the reality. This is crucial, because Brother Aidan stayed in this same role until 2012 as head of SJOG in Malawi.

It meant that any and all suggestions by the order that he did not have authority over children as the allegations mounted were wrong.