

**Council on Social Responsibility
– Southern Executive**

July 2021

A comment on the Mother and Baby Homes Commission report.

We live today in what people have begun to call the “Post Truth Society”. A society where all that matters is how we can turn the facts to our advantage or dispense with them all together if necessary.

John 8:32, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

How far are we now from this word?

It has emerged recently that the testimonies of 550 women were not accurately represented in the report from the Mother and Baby Homes Commission, rather conflated to give a representation of their stories. They were, however, written into the report as examples of individual experiences. The women themselves are emerging and saying repeatedly that they barely recognise themselves in the report and that details are incorrect.

When young unmarried women became pregnant we did not trust them to speak their own truth, make their own decisions or look after their own children. In the recent report on the mother and baby home report we have not trusted women to speak their own truth, describe their own experiences or those of their children.

We can talk about who did what and when. As a church we can and should examine what our denominational responsibility was at the time, in terms of management involvement or otherwise and the consequential trauma to mothers and their babies. We can and do own our responsibility as a part of Irish society and Irish Christianity in those times past. We can and should also reflect on how, now, we are again “putting away” people in our society in places such as halting sites and Direct Provision hostels.

Right now, right in this moment in 2021 in Ireland our responsibility is to support those women and children who suffered, to speak their own truth. We can demand that they be listened to. We can stand behind and beside them advocating for openness, transparency and compassion.

We ask for the simple truth and nothing but the truth of these women’s experiences, reported by them, and listened to by those in authority and the rest of Irish society. This is their right and their due. Until this happens no apology can be adequate and no redress can be enough. Additionally, until we stop repeating this behaviour with other marginalised groups no apology can be believed to be sincere.