

Entire board resigns from House of Prayer

Directors refuse to explain their decision because they have signed a gagging order

By **Cormac McQuinn** and **Warren Swords**

MARIAN visionary Christina Gallagher has lost the entire board of her House of Prayer after all three directors resigned suddenly on the same day, the Irish Mail on Sunday can reveal.

The three directors, whose resignation was revealed in company documents released just this week, have been put under gagging orders to prevent them from explaining their decision to quit the controversial retreat on Achill Island.

It is the second resignation of an entire board of directors at the company. Older company records show four directors threw in the towel on 8 November 2008.

All three of the directors who took over from that board, retired optician Eithne Lavery, housewife Bridie Conneally and school principal Annette Casey, said they could not comment on the reason for their own resignations just over two weeks ago.

They cited a confidentiality agreement they had signed with the House of Prayer. All three directors said the MoS should ask the House of



VISION: Christina Gallagher greets pilgrims in Achill retreat, left, and, above, in 2008, in a state of ecstasy

Miss Lavery said: 'We did resign together, that is correct, but due to a confidentiality clause I'm afraid I cannot disclose our reasons or our concerns for resigning.'

'However, you have my permission if you wish to ask any of the members of the House of Prayer for a copy of my letter of resignation, so that would be the route that you would go.'

Similarly Mrs Conneally said: 'We are bound by confidentiality, which we have been reminded of, that we signed when we became directors, just over two years ago.'

'You have our full permission to go to [House of Prayer] and request a copy of our letter of resignation.'

Asked if Christina Gallagher would like to say anything about the resignations, Sr Doyle said: 'Christina is in ill-health at the moment and I doubt that she would.'

She added: 'Is it surprising after what the media have put her through for the past five years? The miracle is that she is alive.'

Archbishop of Tuam Michael Neary has warned visitors to the House of Prayer to be 'very careful and circumspect in going there'. Both the gardaí and Revenue Commissioners have investigated the centre.

Aside from the Revenue stripping Miss Gallagher's retreat of its charitable status in 2006, no action has been taken against it.

The latest accounts show that the centre had a 'retained profit carried forward' of €1,726,560. cormac.mcquinn@mailonsunday.ie

Claimed she suffered stigmata on her feet

Prayer to release their resignation letters to discover why they stepped down.

But on Friday Sr Treasa Doyle, manager of the retreat, refused to hand over the correspondence, saying it was confidential.

The three directors of Miss Gallagher's Achill Island retreat, run by the Our Lady Queen of Peace House of Prayer (Achill) Ltd company, quit on June 11. But publicly available company records were updated at the Companies Registration Office this week.

Miss Gallagher first claimed to



MINTED: One of Gallagher's luxury homes, bought for €4m, in Abington, Malahide, Dublin

have seen visions of the Virgin Mary in her kitchen two decades ago and later claimed to suffer from stigmata on her feet.

She set up the House of Prayer in

the early 1990s, amassing a vast fortune and several multimillion-euro homes even though she has no visible personal income. Among the luxury properties she and her

family have acquired is a €4m mansion in Malahide's exclusive Abington estate where her neighbours include Westlife's Nicky Byrne and his wife Georgina, daughter of Bertie Ahern.

Two years ago, an undercover reporter from the MoS attended

'It's a miracle that Christina is still alive'

services in the House of Prayer where they heard Miss Gallagher and her spiritual adviser Fr Gerard McGinnity, seeking donations from her followers and warning that the antichrist was coming.

Last night the former directors of the House of Prayer refused to say why they resigned.