

Press Release - 24 March 2010

Limerick Diocesan Administrator, Fr. Tony Mullins

welcomes the publication of

Pope Benedict's XVI Pastoral Letter to the People of Ireland

The Diocesan Administrator, Fr. Tony Mullins has today, 24 March 2010, indicated his hope that a wide ongoing process of engagement with the content and theme of the Pastoral Letter will take place among Parishioners, Parish Pastoral Councils, Pastoral Area Teams, Child Protection Committee and other Diocesan groups in the coming weeks and months.

Said Fr. Mullins: "I welcome the publication of Pope Benedict's Letter to the Catholics of Ireland. This pastoral letter is a significant step on what has been and will continue to be a long and difficult journey towards healing. The Churches response to all who have suffered and who continue to suffer as a result of these evil crimes must always be one of understanding, generosity and love. It is important that the truth of what has happened in the past is established. Pope Benedict says that *"Only decisive action carried out with complete honesty and transparency will restore the respect and good will of the Irish people towards the Church."*

"In his letter the Pope has indicated the path that we must now take if we are to bring about healing and reconciliation. The Pope calls us to take the way marked out by the Gospel, by observing the commandments and by conforming our lives ever more closely to Jesus Christ. Pope Benedict says that taking this pathway will lead us to experience *"the profound renewal that is so urgently needed at this time."* The Pope urges us to take this journey of renewal together. He encourages the entire Church community to turn toward Christ the healer, so that we can rediscover Christ's infinite love for each one of us.

"Only by facing the reality of the past through the deepening of our spiritual lives can we begin to discover the truth of the past, and rediscover the hope that our faith offers us in the darkness of this time.

"I wish to echo Pope Benedict's words and take this opportunity to thank the men and women throughout the diocese already working for the safety of children and urge everyone to become familiar with the safeguarding procedures in this diocese which have been developed with and approved by the National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Pope calls on Bishops to cooperate with the civil authorities. I want to assure you that this is the policy of our diocese and that all allegations of child sexual abuse by priests have been reported to the civil authorities. I encourage anyone who has concerns about child sexual abuse to contact An Garda Síochána, Henry Street, 061-212400, HSE West 061-482792, or the Diocesan designated person 087-3233564.

"It is hoped that a wide ongoing process of engagement with the content and theme of the Pastoral Letter will take place among Parishioners, Parish Pastoral Councils, Pastoral Area Teams, Child Protection Committee and other Diocesan groups in the coming weeks and

months. We are blessed in this diocese to have established a strong structure of lay involvement in all areas of the diocese. This structure will now be a strength to us as we move forward. The continued involvement and support of committed lay people is critical if we are to bring about the renewal that Pope Benedict calls us to.

“To mark the publication of the Pope’s letter an hour of prayer and reflection in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament will be held in St. John’s Cathedral Wednesday 31st March (Spy Wednesday) at 7.30p.m. Priests and parishioners from around the diocese are encouraged to attend as we continue on the path of healing.

“I invite the people of the diocese to make the prayer the Pope has sent us *with the care of a father for his children* our own prayer, a prayer that will echo from homes, parishes, schools and communities throughout the diocese. At this time lets us pray that the diocese will be blessed with a bishop who will continue to encourage the lay faithful to play their part in the life of the Church so that together we can witness to the redeeming truth and love of Christ.

“Veritas publications are printing the Pope’s letter in booklet form at the moment. It is hoped to have a supply of these booklets for distribution within two weeks. These booklets will be distributed throughout the diocese when they become available. In the meantime the Pastoral letter and summary can be downloaded from the Diocesan website www.limerickdiocese.org or from the Irish Episcopal Conference website www.catholicbishops.ie

“Finally I appeal to people to take the time to read and reflect on the Letter and to become involved with the process of engagement with its content and theme which will commence in the coming weeks.

The Diocese of Limerick encourages all those who have concerns about child sexual abuse to contact An Garda Síochána, Henry Street, 061-212400, HSE West 061-482792, or the Diocesan designated person 087-3233564.

Ends

For further information, contact Rev Paul Finnerty,
Limerick Diocesan Office: (061) 315856
<http://www.limerickdiocese.org/child.htm>