



Diocese of Limerick
Our Catholic Community

Letter to be read out at Masses this weekend, 1-2 March, 2025

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday and marks the beginning of Lent. The coming six weeks are like a worldwide spiritual “retreat” for Christians. It is a time to grow in love of God and neighbour through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. This year as we enter Lent, we are all mindful of Pope Francis whose health is very fragile. Let us be united in our prayer for him.

The first Friday of Lent has been designated a day of prayer for survivors of abuse. On that day, at Masses in churches throughout the Diocese, we will pray for them, their families and all who have been impacted in any way by issues of abuse.

There is a danger that in recent years we may have become complacent about abuse and its consequences for survivors. For those who have been survivors of abuse or have a loved one who was abused, this is not possible. We as a church must recognise their ongoing pain and our obligation to journey with and support them. Words of apology and regret, without our ongoing commitment can sound hollow and compound the survivors suffering. Equally we must ensure that we do not repeat the failures of the past.

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, I would ask you to be mindful in particular this coming week of the suffering of those who have been survivors of abuse.

During the recent synodal process one of the key issues identified by the members of the Catholic Church in Ireland was the need to address the “open wound” of abuse in the church. While representing the Catholic Church in Ireland at the synod in Rome, I carried with me the stories of the many survivors who have shared their stories in face to face meetings with me. I have been humbled by their bravery. They have inspired me and others to continue our work of safeguarding in the Diocese.

It is important to always renew again and again our commitment to best practice in safeguarding and to be vigilant in ensuring that children and other vulnerable persons experience Church as a place of warmth, a place where they feel at home and a place of hope which nurtures and supports them. As a Diocese we continue our work in safeguarding in this regard I would like to share two specific initiatives from the past year.

First, we developed a programme for our Lourdes Pilgrimage aimed at strengthening our safeguarding practices. This created a positive energy about safeguarding among pilgrims and assisted pilgrims and has provided a positive framework for future pilgrimages.

Second, together with the Gardai, HSE, TUSLA and Mary Immaculate College, we co-sponsored a conference to strengthen our working relationship with agencies working in the area of safeguarding.

I would like to thank the many volunteers throughout the Diocese who are involved in ensuring good safeguarding practices in our parish and pastoral activities.

All our activity is, of course, directed towards the good of those who come to our Church activities. I would like to ask you to play your part in encouraging others to participate in the life of the Church. In particular, I am thinking of young people and people who feel that the Church may be a cold place for them. Let us work together to make the Church a place of warmth and acceptance. I would call on those who feel excluded to come forward and speak to us. The Church needs to learn from your journey.

Let us, as Pope Francis asks, 'become pilgrims of hope'

With kind regards,



✠ Brendan Leahy,
Bishop of Limerick.