

## **Message for Survivors of abuse from Bishop Denis Nulty September 2022**

I was privileged to attend the Tenth World Meeting of Families at the end of June in Rome. Very strong in my memory was the Ninth World Meeting of Families hosted in Dublin. I still remember the very moving Penitential Act made by Pope Francis as he celebrated the final Mass in the Phoenix Park on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

He said:

“Yesterday I met with eight persons who are survivors of the abuse of power, the abuse of conscience and sexual abuse. In reflecting on what they told me, I wish to implore the Lord’s mercy for these crimes and to ask forgiveness for them.

We ask forgiveness for the cases of abuse in Ireland, the abuse of power, the abuse of conscience and sexual abuse on the part of representatives of the Church. In a special way, we ask forgiveness for all those abuses that took place in different kinds of institutions directed by men and women religious and other members of the Church. We also ask forgiveness for cases in which many minors were exploited for their labour.

We ask forgiveness for all those times when, as a Church, we did not offer to the survivors of any type of abuse compassion and the pursuit of justice and truth by concrete actions. We ask forgiveness.

We ask forgiveness for some members of the hierarchy who took no responsibility for these painful situations and kept silent. We ask forgiveness.

We ask forgiveness those children who were taken away from their mothers and for all those times when so many single mothers who tried to find their children that had been taken away, or those children who tried to find their mothers, were told that this was a mortal sin. It is not a mortal sin; it is the fourth commandment! We ask forgiveness.

May the Lord preserve and increase this sense of shame and repentance and grant us the strength to ensure that it never happens again and that justice is done. Amen.”

As Bishop, I thank those who have told their story of abuse. We must do all we can to allow these stories to be heard. My concern is that someone may be suffering in silence, I say to you, do not suffer in silence. In Kildare and Leighlin Diocese we have put structures in place over recent years to ensure these stories are heard, structures that will help rebuild trust that was lost.

Abuse of position or of power must never be condoned. For those who have experienced abuse of any kind in the diocese, those who had their innocence violated and their trust in Church completely shattered, I am truly sorry. I once again reiterate our commitment as a diocese to apply best practice of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in every aspect of diocesan life.

Kildare and Leighlin Safeguarding Office provides an outreach and support service to those affected by abuse. This is a service for those who were abused by priests or others working for or on behalf of the Diocese and their families. The service provided includes:

- Facilitating people to make complaints about child or vulnerable adult abuse
- Accessing counselling and other services for those who need and want such services
- Informing them of the steps being taken to address their concerns
- Arranging, at an appropriate time, a pastoral meeting with me

In Carlow Cathedral every year I lead a Holy Hour of prayer for survivors of abuse on the last Friday before Lent commences. Those who have suffered abuse, their friends and family and any member of the public who wish to devote an hour of prayer for survivors of abuse are welcome to attend. Details of this yearly liturgy will be posted on this website closer to the next date.

For you all who are survivors of abuse I pray a prayer written by an Irish survivor of abuse, it is known as the Candle of Atonement Prayer:

“Lord, forgive us our many sins.

We grieve and repent with all our hearts for having offended you, for our great failings and neglect of the young and vulnerable.

We place all of those who have been hurt by the Church in any way into your loving hands and under the protection of Our Blessed Mother.

Lord, bring peace to their broken lives and show us all the way out of darkness and into the light of your Word.

May we as the people of God be more fully human, more fully Christ-like and more fully your people, that we may see the errors of the past and go forward with renewed hope and faith in Christ and in our Church. Amen”.

I also offer an additional prayer that may be helpful at this time:

“Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,  
Heal your people’s wounds,  
And transform brokenness into wholeness.  
Grant us the courage and wisdom,  
Humility and grace, to act with justice.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labours.  
Grant that all harmed by abuse  
May find peace in justice.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen”.

My prayer and hope is that all who visit this page may be comforted and consoled in the knowledge that the protection of children and vulnerable adults is central to all we do.

Every blessing,

✠Denis Nulty  
Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin