



DIOCESE OF CLOGHER

PRESS RELEASE

Saturday 11 November 2017 – Feast of St Martin of Tours.

**STATEMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF ST MICHAEL'S PARISH,
ENNISKILLEN & LISBELLAW,
FROM THE RIGHT REV JOSEPH McGUINNESS, DIOCESAN
ADMINISTRATOR OF THE DIOCESE OF CLOGHER.
To be read at all Masses in St Michael's Parish on Weekend of 11/12
November 2017.**

TO THE PEOPLE OF ST MICHAEL'S PARISH
Enniskillen & Lisbellaw

Dear Friends,

This weekend there will be many gatherings to remember and honour the millions who lost their lives in past human conflicts, especially the two World Wars. In Enniskillen this will always be a time for a special remembering of the terrible events of 8 November 1987. This last week has been a time of intense sorrow for the victims of that day. The Remembrance Day bombing caused horror and outrage across the community, and left many bearing physical, mental and emotional wounds which they carry to this day. Our thoughts and prayers are first and foremost with them.

Although 30 years have passed since that awful day, the legacy of the bombing is still felt in a real and painful way by individuals and the community. As well as shattering the lives of individuals and families, the bombing also had the potential to create permanent and bitter division within the community here in Enniskillen. That this has not happened is a testament to the generosity of spirit of people and the efforts made by many individuals, community organisations and churches to build relationships in a sensitive and respectful way.

One of the ways in which we cope with grief and loss is in the creation of memorials to our loved ones. As you will know, this has been a goal of many of those affected by the Remembrance Day bombing, and a new memorial to the victims has been created and was unveiled on Wednesday last. You will also be aware that the question has been raised as to where the memorial is to be located.

The latest proposal from the organisers of the memorial is that it could be situated at the entrance to the Clinton Centre, on land that is held by St Michael's Diocesan Trust. This proposal has been the subject of much speculation and comment in the media and elsewhere, much of it ill-informed. I therefore feel that it is important to clarify some of the issues that have been raised.

I want to state firmly that the Diocesan Trust has no objection whatsoever to a permanent memorial being erected to the victims of the Enniskillen bombing. The creation of a public memorial is both a way of providing solace and comfort to those who grieve, and also a way of drawing the community together in remembrance and solidarity.

The proposal that the new memorial be sited at the Clinton Centre, on land held by St Michael's Diocesan Trust, was first brought to our attention in September 2017. About six weeks ago, on 26 September, The Ely Centre, under whose auspices the memorial was created, submitted an application to the Trust to negotiate a lease of a portion of the land at the front of the Clinton Centre with a view to placing the memorial there. The hope was expressed that the Trust could come to a quick decision in time for the unveiling of the memorial on 8 November. The Diocesan Trust willingly agreed to give the proposal full and careful consideration, but made it very clear that the matter couldn't be resolved in such a short space of time, given the issues which would have to be considered.

These included, for example:

Firstly, the legal implications of the proposed lease arrangement;

Secondly, the fact that the site is already leased by the Trust to the Fermanagh University Partnership Board, the tenants of the Clinton Centre;

Thirdly, the obligations of the Trust to the FUPB and its work, inherent in the existing lease;

Fourthly, consideration would have to be given to Health and Safety considerations, etc.

Further to this, you probably know that there is now a proposed plan to expand the use of the Clinton Centre, announced by President Clinton himself on his recent visit. This will mean some modifications to the building and its surroundings, and this would also have implications for the siting of a memorial.

From all this I hope it is clear that, contrary to some comments being made, the Diocesan Trust is not trying to be in any way obstructive, but rather has had to begin to address complex issues which have only recently been posed to it. In

doing so, the Trust is being conscientious in discharging its obligations, both as a church body and a charitable trust.

Some further points need to be made. There has been some suggestion that the Diocesan Trust had a problem with the symbol of the poppy on the memorial. This is quite untrue. Until the memorial was unveiled last Wednesday, the Trust was not aware of what was to be on the memorial and has never expressed any view on this.

The suggestion has also been made that the Trust or the Parish of St Michael's were responsible for the removal of the memorial after the unveiling ceremony. This is also untrue. Given that a permanent site for the memorial has yet to be found, arrangements for its care were and are rightly in the hands of the organisers, in consultation with the PSNI.

It has also been reported that the Diocesan Trust was notified by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council of the proposal to place the memorial on land held by the Trust. The Council has made it clear that it does not, in fact, have this responsibility and that it is for the planning applicant to seek approval from the landowner. As I have stated earlier, the Ely Centre has now done this and the Trust is in the process of giving due and careful consideration to its application.

I hope that the points I have made will help to clarify matters and will also correct any misunderstandings and misinformation. None of us wish to add in any way to the pain of all who have suffered so dreadfully over the last 30 years. Their grief and hurt must be respected. Neither should we cease to continue the work of reconciliation and healing in our community in a way that draws people together in genuine and mutual respect. May the Lord be with us and may his Spirit sustain our efforts.

*Mgr Joseph McGuinness
Diocesan Administrator
Diocese of Clogher
10 November 2017*

Ends.

For further information –

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Notes for Editors:

1. The Diocese of Clogher encompasses all of Co Monaghan, most of Fermanagh, portions of Tyrone, Donegal, Louth and Cavan. It has 37 parishes and 85 churches which are served by 65 priests. It has a Catholic population of 88,000.
2. Monsignor Joseph McGuinness is the Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Clogher, pending the appointment by Pope Francis of a new Bishop of Clogher. Monsignor McGuinness has been Diocesan Administrator since 3 October 2016 and is also the Parish Administrator of Tyholland, Co Monaghan.
3. Monsignor Peter O'Reilly has been the Parish Priest of St Michael's Parish, Enniskillen & Lisbellaw, since September 2010.