



WORDS OF MOST REV DR DENIS BRENNAN D.D.

BISHOP OF FERNS

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ORDINATION TO THE EPISCOPATE

ST AIDAN'S CATHEDRAL, ENNISCORTHY

“I have only one ambition today, to walk with you, the people, religious and priests of the diocese in your joys and your sorrows. Sometimes I may be able to help you, sometimes I may need you to help me.” - Bishop Denis Brennan

There is an old African proverb which says ‘it takes a whole village to raise a child’. In a sense you could say that it takes a whole diocese to raise a Bishop. Today is not just about me alone, it is about all of us and it is about that which binds us together, our common faith in God.

A vocation does not come flat-packed; it grows out of a context of faith and worship. So today is about my family and their neighbours, working and worshipping at the foot of the Blackstairs in the middle of the last century.

Today is about the good, caring priests I knew in Rathnure and Killealy as I grew up. It’s about the Master and Mrs Power, both of whom explained and reinforced the faith of the home.

Today is about the good teachers, lay and clerical whom I met in St. Peter’s College. It’s about the friends I made there, many of whom are here today. It’s also about the six years I spent in St. Peter’s Seminary, again blessed by teachers who nourished our idealism and wanted us to be the best people we could be.

At the present time over four hundred priests who trained and were ordained in St Peter’s are ministering here in Ferns, in England, in Scotland, in the U.S., in Latin America and Africa. I look upon today as a celebration of their lives and ministry. The ministry and good work of those who completed their formation in the other colleges is also very much valued today. Our shared ministerial priesthood binds us as one.

Today is about the Church of Ireland neighbours among whom I grew up and whose sense of God and good neighbourliness I have always admired.

Today is about the sixteen years I spent in the House of Missions, the sense of community and mission that we had there, the shared memories that will always be with us and the fun and friendship that we had, as we travelled from place to place.

Last week I received a letter from the retired Archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal Cahal B. Daly saying that he would not be able to be with us today and wishing me and the diocese well. In the course of his letter he mentioned that when he was a student in Maynooth, he remembers conversations among the student body along the lines of Ferns having something that no other diocese had. The House of Missions was simply that - a very special place - a bequest to the diocese from Bishop Thomas Furlong in 1866 and a place where I was taught

both how to priest and preach.

Today is about the eleven years I spent in St. Senan's Parish here in Enniscorthy, it's about the good people I came to know and admire there and what I can only describe as the good natured humanity of the place!

It's about the nine years I spent in Taghmon, again a place with a great sense of identity, community and fellowship with our Church of Ireland neighbours.

Today is about persons who were abused by priests of the diocese; it's about their struggle to be listened to and believed, their on-going pain and their search for healing.

Today is about the people of the diocese, that little strip of land between the mountains and the sea that we call Ferns, its about our journey in the faith, where we have come from and where we will go in the future.

Today is about the priests of the diocese, good men, who in very challenging times stayed at their posts.

It's about the Religious, generous hearted people who have made a huge contribution to the diocese and who are still quietly bearing witness.

Today is about my predecessors back to St Aidan, about the bishops who confirmed and ordained me, who appointed me and supported me, and the gifts and talents they shared so freely with us.

It's about Bishop Eamonn and his tireless work over the past four years to bring justice and healing. The greatest compliment we can pay to him is to continue his work of healing and reconciliation.

Today is about people who for whatever reason no longer walk with us, they challenge us to be more credible witnesses and they are family too.

It's also about those who have come to live among us, the 'new Irish', they have come to make a new life here, they will enrich us with their talents and heritage and they will help to shape the Ireland of today - and indeed the Church of today - and tomorrow.

Today is about the sick and the witness they give, and through the offices of South East Radio, I would like to say a special 'hello' to them today.

Today is about classmates who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, Michael O'Rourke, Frank Barron, Declan Jordan, Jim Shaughnassy and Fintan Whitty.

Today is about Monsignor Patrick J. Corish, our most senior priest, who when he was seventeen years old remembers hearing that Bishop Codd, the last Wexford born bishop had died.

It is also about our deacon Jim Doyle who is preparing for Ordination to the priesthood in May.

All these people are part of what we celebrate today, part of our journey and part of our story - our past, our present and our future - Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forever.

I have only one ambition today, to walk with you, the people, religious and priests of the diocese in your joys and sorrows. Sometimes I may be able to help you, sometimes I may need

you to help me.

My prayer is that whatever the future may hold for us, we will walk into it together in faith, hope and love.



Ends

+ Denis Brennan

Bishop of Ferns

23 April 2006