



DIOCESE OF GALLOWAY, CANDIDA CASA, 8 CORSEHILL ROAD, AYR KA7 2ST

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14th April 2018

My Dear People,

It is now three years since I became Bishop of Galloway Diocese. In that time there have been two priests sent to prison. One for financial irregularities and now Fr. Paul Moore for the much more serious matter of sexual abuse, including that of a five year old child.

This abuse may have happened decades ago but the victims who suffered then are still suffering now, since such abuse has long term consequences. It is difficult to know how to help these victims, and indeed all who have survived abuse, but we must make it a priority to do so. The damage done is often also spiritual damage destroying their faith in the Church and perhaps even their faith in God.

When the first allegations were made over twenty years ago, they were reported to the police, but it has taken until now for the case to come to court. This has added to the agony of the victims. I do hope that despite the trauma of having to go to court they take some comfort from the verdict. I would like to offer my personal apology to the victims: I am deeply saddened and pained by the abuse they have suffered, particularly since the one guilty of abuse is a priest of Galloway Diocese.

The people of the Diocese too have suffered, and are suffering now, along with the Church throughout Scotland, as the negative publicity which is a fallout from the trial is not only embarrassing to Catholics but also calls into question the trust they have in their priests.

Sexual abuse by the clergy is a true “scandal”. It is an obstacle to belief and undermines the work of the Church in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. It could be argued that the greatest obstacle to preaching the gospel

today in Scotland is the Catholic Church itself. The good efforts of many are undermined by the scandalous behaviour of some.

We all have our own faults and failings. This affair is not an occasion for us to condemn others but to take stock of our own lives and appreciate how our own imperfections get in the way of the gospel.

I offer my sympathy to all the clergy of the Diocese. They dedicate their lives to the service of the people, working hard as they persevere in the daily grind of parish work. But clergy morale is bound to be affected as yet another abuse conviction blackens the good name of all.

The Catholic Church in Scotland has just published new procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. I am grateful to the many volunteers in parishes who work hard to establish a climate where abuse is unlikely to happen, ensuring that our parishes are safe spaces for our children. Much has changed in the last forty years, we are now much more aware of how common abuse is, and we are much more alert, I hope, to ensuring it does not take place.

May I ask you to join me in praying for the victims of abuse and in urging anyone who has been abused to come forward and report it to the authorities.

Regarding Fr. Paul Moore, he too needs our prayers. His case must be referred to Rome: a process whose likely outcome is that he will be dismissed from the priesthood.

Despite the problems we face in life, particularly in living our Christian faith, may the Spirit of God keep the joy of the gospel alive in our hearts so that it may shine through our frailties and those of the Church and bring joy to the world.

May God's blessing be with you and your families this Easter season,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Nolan', with a small cross symbol to its left.

+William Nolan

Bishop of Galloway