



Press Release - Tuesday 19 February 2019 - Immediate  
Attn: Newsdesks, Photodesks and Religious Affairs Correspondents

Archbishop Eamon Martin offers message to survivors of abuse ahead of Vatican meeting for the protection of minors

· An audio version of the message is available on this week's Faithcast podcast

Ahead of his departure for this week's special meeting in the Vatican on the protection of minors in the Catholic Church, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh and President of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, has offered a message to survivors and victims of abuse.

As part of his preparations for the Vatican meeting, Archbishop Eamon has engaged in numerous face to face consultations and discussions with survivors of abuse across the four provinces of Ireland. He has also received feedback in writing from survivors and from the lay faithful.

The text of Archbishop Eamon's message follows:

Dear brothers and sisters, survivors of abuse,

As I prepare to journey to Rome for the meeting with Pope Francis about safeguarding, I want to assure you that you are uppermost in my thoughts. In recent weeks I have met with some of you and heard about how you were hurt and violated, and about how your young lives were turned into a nightmare by people who betrayed the sacred trust that you and your families had placed in them.

I am truly sorry for what was done to you.

I've learned also about how abuse devastated your confidence in yourself and others, your relationships, your family, and in some cases your spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being. Abuse broke your heart and spirit and sometimes you couldn't tell anyone for years. And then - when all you wanted was to be believed and supported by the Church, and your abuser to be stopped from harming others - there were too many failures to listen, to understand, and to do what was right and just.

I am truly sorry for these failures.

No wonder many of you find it difficult to forgive. You are still shocked by every new revelation which reopens your wounds and makes you feel the Church still hasn't learned or fully understood.

Some of you have asked me for prayers, and for the Church to openly express atonement and say "sorry". You rightly demand complete transparency and prompt cooperation with police and statutory authorities. You expect us to maintain robust efforts and standards for the protection of children, to continue to fully involve lay women and men in deciding and overseeing best practice, to independently audit our progress so that we never become complacent. You want our response to be child-centred and open to justice and accountability. You appreciate the counselling and support services offered by Towards Healing and others who have personally and pastorally reached out to you.

As I journey to Rome I realise that you are precious members of the Body of Christ; you always have been and always will be. You deserve to be believed, loved and cherished - not isolated or seen as a threat. I know that nothing I say can undo the terrible wrong you have endured, but I once more commit to doing all I can to ensure that Church activities are as safe as possible for children and vulnerable people. You will always remain in my thoughts and prayers.

End of message

An audio version of this message has been made available on Faithcast, the weekly faith podcast from the Catholic Communications Office. Click here to listen to this week's episode <https://audioboom.com/posts/7179060-faithcast-podcast-episode-33>

ENDS

Notes for Editors

· For media contact in Rome, please email [info@catholicbishops.ie](mailto:info@catholicbishops.ie) or phone Martin Long, Director of the Catholic Communications Office, on +353 (0) 86 172 7678.

· Support provided by the Catholic Church in Ireland for victims and survivors of abuse:  
- The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland;  
- Towards Healing; and,  
- Towards Peace.

These agencies constitute the pastoral response and support services to survivors who suffered child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Ireland. Please see further details below:

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland provides advice on all aspects of case management, including notification of allegations and support for the complainant. Its chief executive is Ms Teresa Devlin. If you are concerned about a child or young person or wish to report a child safeguarding suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation you should contact the statutory authorities. As the Catholic Church in Ireland has a mandatory reporting policy you can also contact the NBSCCCI by:

- Telephone 00 353 (1) 505 3124
- admin@safeguarding.ie

Towards Healing Counselling & Support Services is available to survivors of Church, Religious and Institutional abuse. The Towards Healing director is Mr Michael Lyons and the service provides lay independent and fully accredited counsellors to support survivors.

Towards Healing may be contacted by:

- Freephone (UK & NI) 0800 096 3315 or (RoI) 1800 303 416
- Mobile number for Hearing Impaired Clients +353 (0) 85-8022859
- towardshealing.ie

Towards Peace is a service offering spiritual support to survivors of physical, emotional or sexual abuse perpetrated by Catholic Church personnel in Ireland. Support is also available for family members of abuse survivors. The vision of Towards Peace is to provide a safe supportive space, where people who have been affected by abuse in a Church context can be accompanied as they seek their own experience of spiritual peace, one step at a time. Towards Peace provides spiritual support through one-to-one spiritual direction sessions, with a qualified spiritual companion. Up to twelve sessions are offered and there is no cost.

The director of Towards Peace is Ms Una Allen who can be contacted by:

- Telephone: + 353 (0) 1 5053028 and on +353 (0) 86 7710533
- towardspeace@iecon.ie
- towardspeace.ie

· The annual Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Sexual Abuse took place last Friday 15 February. Candles of atonement are being lit throughout the country to remember those affected by child abuse. Please see <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2019/02/11/candles-of-atonement-to-be-lit-in-cathedrals-and-parishes/>

For media contact: Catholic Communications Office Maynooth: +353 (0) 505 3017 and Brenda Drumm +353 (0) 87 310 4444.

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