



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/98/16

Creator(s): Department of the Taoiseach

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

PRESS RELEASE**ARMAGH DIOCESAN MASS FOR PEACE****in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh****Sunday, July 21, 1996, 3.30 pm****HOMILY BY CARDINAL CAHAL B. DALY****"GOD: MASTER OF THE IMPOSSIBLE"**

The events preceding and ensuing from the Orange parade at Drumcree have plunged many people in both communities in Northern Ireland, and indeed throughout the whole island of Ireland, into deep depression. Responsible journalists and commentators have written and spoken in terms more pessimistic than they have used for a very long time. The bright hopes raised by the ceasefires of August 1994, the euphoria of President Clinton's visit last November, have now been replaced by near despair. Is any hope left of an agreed political settlement of our conflict, and of permanent peace in our land?

There were many ugly things witnessed by all of us on the streets and on our television screens during these last two weeks and witnessed with amazement and disbelief on the television screens of the world. Things were seen happening which made Northern Ireland a shame and disgrace before the world. I deplore and condemn the wanton destruction of property, the intimidation, the massive disruption of economic and social life, with all their ruinous consequences for tourism and for the whole economy. I deplore and condemn the rioting, the petrol bombs, the burning of trucks and cars, the stone-throwing, which occurred in nationalist areas as well as in unionist areas. I condemn unreservedly all sectarian acts of destruction or intimidation on both sides. On my own behalf and on behalf of the Catholics of Armagh, I deplore the disgraceful arson attempt which scorched the doors of the Church of Ireland Cathedral in our own City. I condemn the murder of Michael McGoldrick and the bomb in Enniskillen. Let us avoid all the weasel words used on both sides: "Yes, it was terrible, but it was understandable; the frustration of our community had to find some outlet". Let us cry clearly and loudly that there is no justification for violence on either side; by resorting to violence, each community is simply bombing and burning "their own".

2.

Northern Ireland is manifestly set on the wrong path. We cannot go on like this. We all have much to regret in terms of our own attitudes and behaviour. Those charged with the governance of our society must also answer for their responsibilities.

NEED FOR A PUBLIC INQUIRY

There remain questions which have not been answered. People may say, let us leave all that behind us and move on. But people must have confidence in the civil authorities; they must have confidence in the police force; and only the truth will enable confidence to be gradually built up.

I believe that a genuinely independent public inquiry should be set up to investigate both the causes and the consequences of the disturbances preceding and following the Drumcree march on 11 July last. The inquiry should have a wide remit, covering all the aspects of the events from the Chief Constable's first and second decisions, through the Orange Order protests and the nationalist protests, the behaviour of the RUC in respect of each of these protests, etcetera.

A truly independent inquiry is needed so as to establish or to disprove the widespread perception that the RUC behaved in a partisan fashion, used disproportionate force, or otherwise failed to observe complete impartiality as between the two communities. All this needs assessment by an experienced independent person or body. The conclusions of such a review can guide the public and the Government and the RUC itself in deciding on the nature and extent of the changes in recruitment, training and policing culture which will be needed if the RUC is to win equal confidence from both of our communities. The inquiry should be instituted as soon as possible.

PARADES

A number of parades and marches are already scheduled to take place over the coming months. Some of these are highly or even dangerously controversial. It is essential that steps be taken now to ensure that new outbreaks of violence attendant upon parades and marches be not allowed to occur. The review of the whole problem of parades which has been announced by the Secretary of State is

3.

welcome. Decisions about parade routes are so fraught with political consequences that they must not be left to be taken by the Chief Constable. Government must openly assume its responsibilities in this regard. Parade organisers must be informed of decisions well in advance, and must be left in no doubt but that decisions taken will be enforced.

A heavy moral and civil responsibility rests upon the organisations and organisers concerned to engage in whatever discussion and mediation is needed in order to try to arrive at agreement in advance, and to accept decisions lawfully taken. I support a suggestion recently advanced by Archbishop Eames that, failing agreement at the preliminary stages, "society has a right to expect some provision for adjudication, be it a judicial or other official body". Our society must never again have to endure the tension and turmoil which have already surrounded this year's "marching season".

In this whole area, politicians have a very grave responsibility to the whole community, and not only to one faction of it. Few things are so urgently needed in our society at this time as moderate, steady and responsible political leadership.

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

The saddest revelation of the past two weeks has been that mutual understanding between our two traditions, so much talked about over recent years, has hardly even begun to be a reality. The same objective events have been perceived in the two communities in totally opposite ways, to the point that they come in people's perception and in people's stories to be entirely different events for the one community and for the other. That this is so is surely a sad reflection on all of us, as individuals, as communities, and especially as Christians and as Churches. We must repent, we must pray for the grace of conversion, we must ask forgiveness from God and from one another, we must grant forgiveness to one another, for so many things said or left unsaid, so many things done or left undone, which have contributed to this distressing state of affairs, a state of affairs which is seen by many observers outside the island as a scandal, and should be seen by ourselves as a scandal.

4.

We in the Churches should be doing more to let the light of Christ's gospel of reconciliation into our own darkened consciences and into our situation. The clergy in each Church individually, and the clergy in different Churches together, should be urgently asking ourselves and asking one another, "What does Our Lord want us to do in this situation?". Having honestly and prayerfully reflected upon Christ's Word to us now, we must, like St James, fearlessly do what the Word tells (us) and not just listen to it and deceive ourselves" (James 1:23).

POLITICAL TALKS

The events of the past two weeks have underlined the urgent need for progress to be made in the political talks in which progress has to date been painfully slow. Unless the talks can move beyond the wranglings about procedural points, ground rules and other preliminary and relatively secondary matters and get to grips with substantive issues, the whole process is in danger of running out of credibility. Only by talking and by listening to one another can it be found out how far the respective parties are prepared to move into real negotiations about how or even whether the two traditions can share this land together in agreement for mutual prosperity and well-being or whether we are doomed to continue to dispute this land in endless conflict for our mutual ill and loss.

One of the basic aims in these talks must be for nationalists to try to reassure unionists that their unionist tradition and British identity are widely and sincerely respected in the nationalist community. Nationalists must try earnestly to address the fears of unionists and their sense of insecurity. Talks, I believe, should not be seen by either community as a threat, but rather as a long denied opportunity. The aspirations of neither community can be pursued and safeguarded without the agreement of the other.

It must be clearly said, however, that the greatest single contribution to the peace process at this time would be a reinstatement of the IRA ceasefire. I believe that this is possible. I believe that the conditions which are needed to make it possible can be put in place. I hope and I pray and I ask all to pray that it will happen, and happen soon.

PRAYER POWER FOR PEACE

Prayer is our greatest power for peace. And may all our prayer find its strength in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.