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'Turn yourselves in and ease the agony'

By Noel McAdam
Monday, 25 August 2008

The head of the Catholic Church in Ireland has appealed to the Omagh bombers to give themselves up before they face the judgment of God.

Cardinal Sean Brady said if they had any humanity the perpetrators of the Real IRA outrage 10 years ago would help ease the pain of the families.

In a wide-ranging address at the weekend, the Catholic Primate of All-Ireland also praised the efforts of the Orange Order in promoting dialogue.

And strongly condemning attacks on Orange halls, Dr Brady said the efforts of the institution deserved to be acknowledged and reciprocated.

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He said sensitivities surrounding the 10th anniversary of the Omagh bombing, in which 29 people including a woman pregnant with twins were killed, were a reminder how difficult attempts to deal with the past, which could "give deeper roots to the stability we now enjoy", will be.



What are these?

Addressing the annual Humbet Summer School at Ballina in Co Mayo, he appealed directly "to those who were responsible for the Omagh bombing" and said "Before the innocent children, women and men you massacred I appeal to you to do the right thing before God.

"I appeal to your hearts and human dignity. Give yourselves up to justice in this world before you face judgment in the next. I also appeal to those who have information which could lead to the arrest and conviction of those who made or planted the Omagh bomb. You also have a duty before God to give that information immediately to the police," he said.

"The families of those killed and the surviving victims have suffered enough. Help them to receive justice. If you have any humanity left in your heart at all, do all that you can to ease at least a little of their pain," he went on.

The Cardinal earlier said on-going attacks on Orange halls are symptomatic of an "evil... sectarian pathology" which must be continually challenged.

"The Orange Order deserves credit for what I believe are sincere and convincing efforts to promote dialogue and understanding. These should be acknowledged and reciprocated. Attacks on Orange halls, such as those which took place last week around Armagh, deserve to be unequivocally condemned," he said.

"They are symptomatic of a sectarian pathology which is evil and has to be continually challenged in our selves and every aspect of social, religious and political life."

Dr Brady also spoke of the need for "a much more honest, respectful and constructive dialogue ... about values in our society", and questioned the secular view which he said dominates the media.

"Like the debate within the European Union, is it fair, is it representative of the views and convictions of the majority of the people here in Ireland, that the media is so dominated by a secular view hostile to or disposed to relegate the value of religion? Is it possible to dream dreams and to imagine an approach to each other built on a shared humanism?

"Is it possible to agree that there are objective values for which we should have serious regard because of their implications for the good of society?"

He said he queried "the honesty, for example, in arguing on the one hand that violence, promiscuity and lack of respect in the media has no influence on the attitude, values and behaviour of the young when billions is spent on advertising through the media precisely because of its power to influence attitudes and behaviour?"

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