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Wednesday, August 13, 2008

## Clergy to attend commemoration

DAN KEENAN

OMAGH CLERGY have reversed a decision not to attend a commemoration next Sunday organised by some of the families of those killed in the bombing, in favour of appearing at a council-organised act of remembrance on Friday.

Members of the Omagh families self-help group, chaired by Michael Gallagher, had been told that clergy from the four main churches would not attend an event organised by them and which had been staged for the past five years on the Sunday nearest the bombing anniversary.

The relatives said they were shocked and dismayed by the decision.

These families are not attending Friday's "official" commemoration in Omagh which will be attended by Taoiseach Brian Cowen and senior representatives from the Spanish government, the Stormont Executive and the British government.

Announcing the reversal of their earlier decision last night Mgr Joseph Donnelly said: "We have revisited the decision given recent developments. We had originally put our weight behind the council ceremony in the hope that it would be a unified event.

"But it has become clear in the last few weeks that some families would have found attending that event very difficult indeed. It is not for us to question what they are going through," he said.

"This is a very difficult time for them. So our decision is a pastoral response to the situation."

The families staying away from Friday's ceremony have expressed deep unease at the wording of a permanent memorial to the dead situated at both the bomb site and at a garden of remembrance a short distance away.

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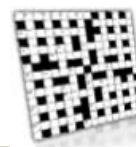
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