

## Bishop seeks advice and support of Lesbian and Gay people in diocese in listening process

In a letter to the people of the Church of Ireland Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, written earlier this month, and to be published in the Diocesan Magazine next weekend, the Bishop, Dr Paul Colton, requests lesbian and gay people, their friends and families, to advise him on how best to put in place 'the listening process' for the Diocese.

The listening process is a core element of the national approach, adopted by the Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, to the sexuality debate within the Church. Regional conferences (involving groups of three dioceses) are planned. First, however, each bishop has been asked 'to initiate a respectful listening/dialogue process in his/her diocese.'



'One element in this listening/dialogue process,' says Dr Colton, 'is that the "stories and views of a spectrum of gay and lesbian people, and their families, should be heard."'

'How to do that?' is a key question said the Bishop:



*We have to confess that the Church has been complicit for centuries in making life intolerable for many lesbian and gay people, even their persecution and victimisation.*

*Careless words have fed homophobia. Many, understandably, as a result have turned their backs on official religion.*

*Even in more recent times, it seems that so much of the debate has been happening without lesbian and gay people being involved: talking about people rather*

*than with them. Nonetheless, I, and those who with me*

*are planning this process in this part of the and Church, feel it is vital that we ask lesbian and gay people themselves here in Cork, Cloyne and Ross how they feel we can create a safer respectful space in which they can be heard as our fellow church members. I recognise too that it is especially difficult for gay and lesbian clergy to join in this listening process, as so much of the recent debate has been personalised and acrimonious. Many, as a result, feel more vulnerable than ever.*

The relevant portion of the Bishop's letter to be published next weekend is:

*Each bishop has been encouraged '...to initiate a respectful listening/dialogue*

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*process' in the Diocese. Small groups have been recommended 'as the best way to ensure "a safe space" for participants.' The purpose 'is to enable participants to become better informed' and to highlight the priorities for each diocese that can be fed into the inter-diocesan conference.' The study of Scripture is to be a focus.*

*In particular, the proposal asks that '... the stories and views of a spectrum of gay and lesbian people, and their families, should be heard.'*

*It is in this connection that I request your help. As your Bishop, I wish to facilitate that listening and dialogue process in this Diocese. My questions to gay and lesbian people, and your families and friends, in the Diocese are: do you wish your story and/or views to be heard by the Church? If so, how best can I, as your bishop, help that to happen?*

*There has been a wide diversity of responses to this debate (some feel vulnerable and targeted, others angry and concerned, and still others have moved on). I know well that many gay and lesbian people, and their families, have been wounded by the Church and, in my Christmas sermon in 2003, I asked forgiveness for that.*

*I do hope, nonetheless, that advice and assistance will be forthcoming about how this listening is best to happen here in Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Please email me or write to me, in strict confidence.*

## **Madam Bishop a first for these islands as Derry rector becomes 'The Most Rev'**

**She will be "The Most Rev" as opposed to "The Right Rev". Bishops of Meath and Kildare are automatically "The Most Rev". All other bishops in the [Church of](#)**

**[Ireland](#) are "Right Rev". She also has been referred to as "Bishop-elect Storey". So what's it to be? - Patsy McGarry writes in The Irish Times**

"Call me Pat," said the Co Down native who will be consecrated on Saturday as the first woman bishop in these islands.



Hers was a late vocation. She wanted to be an air hostess. She was a doctor's receptionist and worked for years with Weight Watchers. She is a wife and the mother of two adult children. This is no ordinary bishop.

She grew up on the Cregagh Road in east Belfast in a family that was "nominally Presbyterian but we didn't go [to church]". She "fell into" religion at [Trinity College Dublin](#). She had gone there in 1978 to study English and French because she wanted to follow in the footsteps of her "very glamorous aunt", who was an air hostess.

A friend was also a student at TCD. "She kinda worked on me I suppose and eventually I started reading the gospels, made a decision of faith for myself." She started attending church in Kill O'The Grange parish – "a lot of the students" went to church – and became a youth worker there on finishing at Trinity in 1982. Working with youth would be a major part of her life.

### **'Ecstatic'**

At the time she survived on £10 a week, stayed with "a lovely couple in Killiney", while her family funded her car. Her family were "really pleased" when she started

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going to church. They were “thrilled, and then when I mentioned the ministry later on in life they were over the moon”. Her mother has since died, while her father is “ecstatic” that she will be a bishop.

It wa

s at Trinity she met her husband, Earl, then training for the ministry. He was a curate in Dungannon when they married in 1983. She became a receptionist for a GP there. They moved to Crinken parish in south Co Dublin in 1986, where Earl was rector for 10 years. Their two children, Carolyn (26) and Luke (22), were born there. She worked for Weight Watchers for several years and “did jobs that fitted in with family life”.

When the children were a bit older she wanted to do more with her life. She and Earl discussed it. He thought “two ministers in the family would be chaos” so when she was accepted it was “a bit of a shock”. She began training in 1994. Her first curacy was in Ballymena, Co Antrim. Earl was by then working in Belfast. She became curate at Glenavy parish there when Earl was rector. “Actually, it was grand but we wouldn’t have done it long term. It was a very happy time . . . we’ve been happy everywhere we’ve been.”

In 2004 they moved to Derry where she has been rector at St Augustine’s since. Earl has set up a PR business there. “It’s devastating to be packing up and leaving. I love Derry. It’s a very special city.”

She was on the road to Derry when she got that “most unexpected” call from Church of Ireland primate Archbishop Richard Clarke. She had been at a wedding in Wicklow and was driving home.

### **Elected**

“The archbishop said something like: ‘Look Pat, this is going to be a surprise. You’d better pull in’.” He told her she had been elected Bishop of Meath and Kildare. “I fall on the floor of my little MX5 and think how

will I get home with this news?” She asked for 24 hours to think about it.

She rang Earl. “I think he thought from the tone of my voice someone had died.” The family discussed it. She and Earl went for a long walk over the Foyle bridge, and back.

“It would have been a very hard thing to turn down.” She recalled how Archbishop Clarke had said “trust the church. Trust the process. You’ve been elected. It’s not tokenism. Those sort of things helped. I felt like I had to trust the Holy Spirit.” The following morning she rang to accept.

She and Archbishop Clarke have discussed how she is to be addressed and decided that, on formal occasions, she will be addressed as “Madam Bishop”.

This afternoon, in Maynooth, she and Earl will move into the residence of the Bishop of Meath and Kildare. She will be consecrated in Dublin’s Christ Church Cathedral on Saturday.

## **Church's response to abuse victims was too slow, says Archbishop**

**ARCHBISHOP [Diarmuid Martin](#) of Dublin has rebuked those in the Catholic Church who were "all too slow" in recognising the extent of the "criminal abuse of children" by priests.**

Sarah McDonald writes in The Irish Independent - He was speaking at a Mass to mark the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Office in the archdiocese of Dublin.

### **SURVIVORS**

At a ceremony in the Pro-Cathedral attended by 400 child safeguarding representatives from parishes across Dublin, as well as priests and



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representatives of survivors of abuse, Dr Martin said the church needed to do more to reach out to survivors of clerical abuse.



The Archbishop urged the church to create "an open door and a safe space for those survivors who still fear telling their story and who still live alone with their anguish". Speaking to the Irish Independent, the Archbishop explained that from his meetings with survivors, he realised that some of them "are in a lonely place".

"Very often they have nobody to talk to – they are not a member of an association. They were abused in a way that the pressure was put on them to keep it secret."

He said they would like to have a space where they could come together, meet one another and support one another.

During the Mass, prayers were said for those victims of abuse who could not cope and had died by suicide.

The church hasn't sent out "a sufficient word of welcome to those who have been abused", Dr Martin added.

He also had strong words of criticism for those who sought to protect the institution and failed the church's children.

"People were angered by the church's response. The institution in protecting its own, failed those children," he said.

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In further comments he warned: "We give thanks for the work achieved by all those associated with the Diocesan Child Safeguarding and Protection Office. But that work is not over. The sexual abuse of children continues in our world."

## **PREDATORS**

"Sexual predators will seek out our weak points and break through the weaknesses of our systems. We cannot afford to let our guard down."

Survivor of abuse, Marie Collins, told the Irish Independent the child-protection service in Dublin diocese had "good strong child protection measures in place" but added "there is still a lot of work to be done – we can always make sure it is safer".

## **Quote of the Day: To Go On Trying**

WE TRY SO HARD as Christians. We think such long thoughts, manipulate such long words, and both listen to and preach such long sermons. Each one of us somewhere, somehow, has known, if only for a moment or so, something of what it is to feel the shattering love of God, and once that has happened, we can never rest easy again for trying somehow to set that love forth not only in words, myriads of words, but in our lives themselves. And when, as must always happen, we sometimes give up this trying either because for a moment it seems unreal or because we are tired or bored or because we forget or choose to forget, we cannot

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even enjoy our moment's release for  
the sense of failure that chokes us.  
This is of course as it should be.  
Fruitless and destructive as so much  
of our trying must always be, and  
tormented as we are by knowing this  
and by beholding the shallowness  
and duplicity of our motives, we  
have scarcely any choice but to go  
on trying no matter what, and there  
is much that is beautiful and brave  
and true about it. Yet we must  
remember this other word too:  
"Unless you turn and become like  
children .... "

**Frederick Buechner**