



Provincial Office  
**Order of Carmelites**

June 2021

Dear friends,

I am writing to you today to communicate a decision of the Provincial Council of the Carmelite Order. After serious consideration over the last two years, it has been decided to return the pastoral care of the parish of St Colmcille's to the Archdiocese of Dublin. I wish to assure you that this is not a decision we have made lightly. Indeed, it is one we make with heavy hearts.

As you are no doubt aware, the Carmelites have been present here in Knocklyon since the foundation of the parish. Over the years, the Carmelites, in collaboration with you the people, built up this parish. There has always been a great sense of community here in Knocklyon, and I know that the many Carmelites who have lived and worked in this parish have formed strong and lasting friendships. This is a difficult day for us all and the news that I share with you will be greeted some surprise and with much sadness. However, I believe that this is just the end of one chapter in the story of St Colmcille's. Your commitment to your parish and strong spirit of co-responsibility has helped form wonderful structures, teams and groups which will sustain the parish and help it continue to grow, develop and serve the people well into the future.

As Carmelites, we have faced many difficulties over the last number of years, key among them is the absence of vocations to our way of life. This fact has led to the serious issue in our ability to maintain all our communities and ministries in Ireland. We have made difficult and painful decisions. Over the last ten years, we have returned the care of the parish of Beaumont to the Archdiocese of Dublin, closed our community in Knocktopher, Co. Kilkenny, and entrusted the care of our friary church in Kildare Town to our Carmelite brothers from India.

However, even with these decisions, we face ongoing issues maintaining an effective presence in our remaining communities. To put this in context, there are currently 39 Carmelites living in Ireland, 27 of whom are over 70 years of age, and some of those are in poor health. The decision to return the parish to the Archdiocese is in no way a reflection on the parish. Rather, the decision is based upon our personnel resources and on the needs and abilities of our members at this time.

Some may see the timing of this announcement as unfortunate, as we are emerging from the restrictions and difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, within the context of the Archdiocese of Dublin, this can be viewed as a hopeful time. In his homily on Holy Thursday of this year, Archbishop Dermot Farrell announced the establishment of a Taskforce to assess the needs of the people of the Archdiocese and “to prepare an approach to a pastoral strategy that supports parish communities of faith to undertake a radical renewal, looking to the future with creativity.” As we emerge from the pandemic, we cannot simply return to the way things were before. We must work to establish a new way of being community and being parish. It is my hope that this pastoral strategy in the Archdiocese will inspire a new and exciting chapter in the life of the Diocese and especially in the parish of St Colmcille’s.

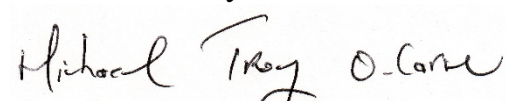
Over the last number of months, we have been in dialogue with the Archdiocese and it will be the role of the Archbishop to appoint the pastor who will succeed the Carmelites here in St Colmcille’s. We will work together with the Parish Pastoral Council and the Archdiocese to ensure a smooth transition, as your parish returns to diocesan administration on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

The message of today’s Gospel is very clear: Christ is with us at all times and in every situation. Just as Jesus was present with his disciples in the midst of the storm on the lake, he is present with us on the ups and downs of our journey of life, helping us come through them.

To conclude, I would like to thank the local Carmelite community, Fr Fintan Burke, Fr Martin Parokaaran, Fr Joe Mothersill and Fr Michael Morrissey, for their commitment and work in the parish over the last number of years. This will be a particularly difficult time for them as they carry the burden of our decision. I thank the Parish Pastoral Council for their support and collaboration, as we begin to transition to a new administration. I thank Archbishop Farrell for his understanding and support in this time of change and challenge. Finally, I would like to thank you all. As I mentioned, there has always been a strong sense of community here in Knocklyon. We are greatly appreciative of the support and encouragement you have shown towards the Order both in Ireland and in Zimbabwe over the last 47 years. I believe that the bonds which have been built between the Carmelites and the people of Knocklyon has enriched us all and will continue to be a cherished source of pride and strength for many years to come.

As we work together over the coming months, I pray that God’s Spirit of understanding and courage be with us all as we build a hope-filled future for our Church and Order. In the midst of our anxieties and fears, we are invited to call on Jesus, for he is always there with us, and he hears our cry. May God continue to bless each one of us in our lives and ministries.

Yours sincerely,

  
Michael Troy, Prior Provincial