



Irish Province of
CARMELITES

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21st July 2021

Dear Michael,

I want to thank you and the members of the Parish Pastoral Council for meeting with Fr David and myself on 6th July 2021. During this meeting, you presented the Petition from the parishioners of St Colmcille's Parish. Thank you for outlining the petition process and the logic behind its organisation. This was appreciated. More importantly, during our conversations, you gave voice to the strong feelings and sense of loss behind many of the signatures. I also acknowledge the love and support you expressed towards the Carmelites who have ministered in St Colmcille's Parish over the years to the present day. Again, I thank you for expressing your views on our decision to return the pastoral responsibility of the parish to the Archdiocese of Dublin. I recognise how significant the Carmelite presence in Knocklyon has been for many people. I acknowledge that our decision does not represent a single loss, but many: the ministry, the sense of community and shared history, and the friendships. These are cherished memories for which we are thankful.

The petition you presented was discussed at our Provincial Council meeting. While there was acknowledgement and appreciation of the feelings expressed, it was agreed that the decision to return the care of the parish of St Colmcille's to the Archbishop of Dublin is still the right course of action. This will be effective from 30th January 2022. Our decision was made in the context of a wider discernment regarding the future of the Order in Ireland. It was a very difficult decision to make, and it understandably saddens people in the parish. However, it remains a necessary decision in the overall context of Carmelite life and ministry.

We are an ageing Order in Ireland. We have had only two new members join in the last twenty-five years, a pattern which is unlikely to change significantly in the near future. Closing communities or handing on ministries/roles we have traditionally fulfilled, as we have done in recent years, may be regretted. Some will view it as a negative step and a limitation on our pastoral outreach. I assure you that it was a great challenge to weigh the relative gains and losses, both tangible and intangible, of handing back the parish to the Diocese. It was not a decision that was made lightly. However, I believe that taking these necessary and strategic decisions now will allow the Carmelites in Ireland to focus on the future in hope, help ease the personnel situation in the province and enable us to commit to the communities and ministries which remain. While I acknowledge the great relationship between the Carmelites and the people of Knocklyon, I must also state that in all our communities, in Ireland and Zimbabwe, our ministry is important, valued by the people and satisfying for the friars, and there have been enduring friendships built in each of them.

I am filled with Zeal for the Lord

While it can be said that there is no good time to make difficult decisions in life, there is a right time. We believe that a Chapter year and, as previously mentioned, a year in which the Dublin Diocese has engaged in a planning process is the right time. The parish is also currently in a position of strength, and we are not making the decision as a result of a crisis. This will allow us to work with you, the Pastoral Council, to develop and implement the best transition possible. If the timeframe of the decision were changed this would not necessarily be the case.

Through the dedication of the people of Knocklyon and the Carmelites who ministered in St Colmcille's over the years, you have established a great community spirit. Together with the wonderful parish structures and resources, liturgical teams/groups and countless volunteers, the parish can face the future challenges with confidence and hope. The parish of St Colmcille's and ministry to the people to Knocklyon will continue into the future. Yes, it will be different and will be a change for many people, but we all have to adapt to changing circumstances in the Church and in the Carmelite Order.

While acknowledging the sense of loss that many may feel, I would hope that over the next six months, we will work together to address the concerns you have for your parish at this time of transition and change, to celebrate and give thanks for the past, but most crucially to work to outline a future vision for the parish, that is positive, filled with hope and joy. I appreciate that much of this work will fall to the Pastoral Council, and I pray that God's spirit of wisdom and courage be with you in your role, as you lead the parish forward into a new period of ministry in Knocklyon.

From your experience as parish leadership and of the Dublin Diocese on many different levels, you know that the Church of the future will be very different and will involve lay leadership, radical renewal and looking to the future with creativity. I am confident that your parish will meet those challenges with the energy and enthusiasm that has been the hallmark of St Colmcille's over the years. In this time of change in the Church and in the Diocese might not St Colmcille's Parish play a leading role in developing a new model of parish ministry and administration into the future? It was through the grace of God that St Colmcille's Parish mutually enriched the people of Knocklyon and the Carmelite Order in so many ways and on many levels, and it will be by the grace of God that a new period of ministry, growth and development will emerge over the coming months and years.

May Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Mother and Sister, continue to walk with us on our journey of life and may she enfold us in her mantle of love and protection. May God continue to bless you and all those you love.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Troy O.Carm." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Troy O.Carm.,
Prior Provincial