

Fr. Michael Troy O.Carm,  
Prior Provincial,  
Order of Carmelites,  
Gort Mhuire,  
Ballinteer,  
Dublin 16.

6<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Dear Fr. Michael,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Parish Pastoral Council of St Colmcille's Parish in Knocklyon, in response to your letter of June 2021, which was circulated to parishioners following your address to all masses on the weekend of the 19<sup>th</sup> /20<sup>th</sup> June.

In your letter you confirmed that the Provincial Council of the Carmelite Order in Ireland intended to return the pastoral care of the parish of St Colmcille's to the Archdiocese of Dublin from the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2022. As you anticipated, this news was greeted with extreme sadness, disappointment and indeed some anger by parishioners.

In outlining the decision to return the Parish to the diocese, you indicated how the absence of vocations to your way of life is presenting the Carmelite Order with ongoing difficulties in its ability to maintain an effective presence in its current ministries in Ireland.

While we acknowledge these difficulties, we respectfully suggest that the lack of vocations is not only confined to the Carmelite Order but is rather a reality affecting all clergy - both religious and diocesan.

Likewise, while we recognise the ageing profile of the Province, we have never witnessed how this has in any way inhibited the dedication and enthusiasm of those of your colleagues who have been more than willing to minister among us throughout the years, since the foundation of the parish.

Therefore, while we remain supportive of and sympathetic to the significant challenges you face, we also have the following concerns for both our parish and for the Carmelite Order:

- 1) Why return the parish to Diocesan administration at this time, when there are Carmelite priests available and prepared to continue in parish ministry here?
- 2) The Carmelite website indicates that service borne “in the midst of the people” and working within the “needs of the time” are both central to its way of life. We suggest that there is no better way in bearing witness to this charism than through the continuation of the Carmelite ministry in Knocklyon parish.
- 3) Given the importance of maintaining an effective Carmelite presence in Ireland and given the reach of Knocklyon parish, surely remaining in Knocklyon would make more sense than trying to retain one of the smaller Carmelite houses?

Consequently, we believe that your decision to withdraw from pastoral ministry in Knocklyon Parish is misplaced at this time, given the wider difficulties faced not just by the Carmelites but also by our parish and the diocese as we collectively struggle to bear effective witness during the ongoing pandemic.

Having listened carefully to all of the views expressed to members of the Parish Pastoral Council individually and collectively, verbally and in correspondence and emails, we decided to organise a petition requesting that the Provincial Council of the Carmelite Order in Ireland reverse their decision to return the care of Knocklyon Parish to the Dublin Archdiocese at this time.

The petition was launched on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June and closed on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July. In that time, more than 3,200 parishioners signed the petition, either in person or, on the parish website. The number of signatories is, we believe, indicative of the widespread support that exists to retain the Carmelite presence in our parish.

The level of support generated will, we hope, allow the Provincial Council to reconsider their decision and to instead agree to continue in ministry in the parish for the foreseeable future.

Attached to this letter is the full petition pack for your consideration.

Fidelity to our collective vocation and Christian commitment requires constancy, dedication and perseverance; all of which have been the hallmark of the Carmelite charism through its pastoral ministry to God’s people in Knocklyon.

It is therefore our fervent hope that you might see the value of continuing the Carmelite ministry in Knocklyon. As such, we earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit of understanding and

courage intercede to be with you and to guide you in discerning God's will for all that is right for both Knocklyon Parish and the Carmelite Order.

In these days preceding the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, we pray for her intercession, that the Provincial Council may find the courage to reconsider the timeframe of their decision and that, inspired by her example and in allegiance to her Son, Jesus Christ, you may continue in striving to serve Him faithfully among the people of Knocklyon.

Yours sincerely,

Michael O'Brien,  
Chair,  
Parish Pastoral Council