



Diocese of Plymouth
From the Office of the Bishop

A Message to the Diocese for the weekend of 14-15th November 2020

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

I write to express my sorrow, and my solidarity with you at this time. It has been painful and shaming for us to read, or hear about, the *Report* from the *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse*, which was published this week. I know that whatever we experience, is but a shadow of the agony and pain caused to victims-survivors, who were abused within our Church. Their voices must continue to be fully heard. Such individuals are persons with immense dignity, who make an invaluable contribution in finding the right way forward for all of us. To anyone who carries this burden or who has been hurt in any way, I say how sorry I am. Please let us know if there is anything we can do. We must do all we can to continue to listen to your stories and to provide the proper accompaniment, if you are open to that, from us. Our prayer for you, is that this process will help you find some healing.

The *Report*, along with the *Independent Review into Safeguarding*, conducted by Mr Ian Elliot, on behalf of the Church, and which has taken place over the past months, will be key in informing our ongoing work of Safeguarding in the Church. The bishops will reflect on these next week during our regular meeting.

Let us be vigilant in strengthening the procedures which the Church has embraced these past years, and which are used in collaboration with the statutory authorities. I want to thank most especially all those generous people, Catholic and non-Catholic, who are an important part of our Safeguarding processes.

This is an important point in our journey of Safeguarding. One which in many ways, brings many of us to our knees but, in humility, that is a good place to begin again from. Please keep all those engaged in this work in your prayers, but above all, those who have suffered abuse in their lives. I attach some contact details for anyone who has suffered. I would be open to hearing from anybody in the Diocese who wanted to share their experience with me.

With my prayer and asking yours for me.

Yours devotedly,

Rt Rev Mark O'Toole
Bishop of Plymouth