

Diocese of Ossory

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Dear People of the Diocese,

In a few short days, I will be ordained as Bishop of Ossory. I will be setting out on a journey with you, the people of this Diocese, a journey that involves many challenges, a journey of faith. I come to you with a joyful heart and I look forward to what I hope will be an engaging and fruitful ministry. As the response to the psalm in today's Mass reminds us: only with God's help is this possible; it is he who has the words of eternal life (see John 6:69). Without him we are adrift. That is why I chose as my motto: "Our help is in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 123 [124]:8). It is the Lord who revives the soul, who brings us to life, who gives wisdom, gladdens the heart, and gives light to our eyes (see Psalm 18 [19]:7-8).

Our Parishes and Our Communities—Our Life Together

Since my appointment was announced on 3rd January, I have received many cards and letters promising prayers and good wishes; they have been an enormous source of strength. I have felt these last two months your support and the support of the priests, and have been deeply moved by the faith and trust, hope and warmth I have experienced. I am particularly grateful to you all.

I have been a priest for almost thirty eight years. From my experience of serving in various parishes there are very many people who pray, celebrate the sacraments, and exhibit great generosity in volunteering to serve on parish committees and community organisations. Their generous help is offered without thought of any personal reward beyond the fulfilment that comes from serving the parish and community. Rooted deeply in God's enduring presence, such people are the backbone and lifeblood of our parishes, and make all the difference in caring for the homeless, accompanying youth, alleviating poverty, supporting senior citizens and reaching out to refugees and immigrants. You embody the goodness of God when you give of your time to people with disabilities, meals-on-wheels services, active retirement associations and sports clubs.

When faith transforms our lives in this way, amazing things can happen (see Eph. 3:20). Our lives become genuine expressions of the Church's commitment to the call of the Gospel. At the end of Mass we pray: "Go and announce the Gospel." By your profound witness you are doing all that you can in your time to express publicly the generosity and goodness that springs from genuine commitment to the faith of the Church. By allowing the Word of God to speak in our hearts we become the goodness of God. Together we are called to find a pathway into the future — all of us people of this place — not only those who are very much at home in the Church, but also those who might feel themselves more distant from it.

Faith is a gift of God; it is a mystery. As well as a gift, it is also a call. As this new century progresses rapidly we need to find new ways of saying something about God, about eternal life, about the majesty of God's life within us and of entering into the mystery of God's mercy, the source of our hope when faced with weakness and sin. Together we must speak the Word of God in a way that touches the questions — and the hearts — of our contemporaries.

My Hopes for the Parishes, Communities, and the People of Ossory

In today's world people find it more and more difficult to trust in institutions. The world is looking for credible voices. My hope is that we will not be just people who proclaim the Word but people who do it (James 1:22), that we would witness to the Word that God speaks in our hearts so that not only will we be able to speak about God mercifully, but live out that mercy of God. More and more may we become credible witnesses to Gospel hope and Gospel joy in this world of fragile peace and broken promises. May we discover for ourselves the life-changing joy of meeting the Risen Lord, in whom all violence, cynicism and pessimism meet their end.

I am very aware of the rich spiritual traditions and practices that are part of the faith story of the people of Ossory. My hope is that we can build on these very solid foundations as we deal with the changes and challenges that are facing every local faith community in the Diocese. And yet as today's Sunday Gospel (John 2:13–25) reminds us there is always going to be a tension between the material and the spiritual, between the market place and the Father's house. Let us not be disheartened when we come face to face with these tensions in our communities or in our families; let us not be disheartened for there too the Lord is present; I pray that we may find Him in those difficult places; may our homes, our parishes and our Diocese be a place where this tension bears fruit.

The Journey Before Me in the Months Ahead

I look forward to getting to know you, and to making my home among you. It will take time to learn about this part of the world, to get to know the rich history of the Church in Ossory, its people — those with a long history here, those recently arrived — all of us on a common journey. We are all indebted to those who have gone before us in the faith from Saint Kieran to the pastors and shepherds of our own times.

Requests

At my ordination to the priesthood in June 1980 I said I was ready to serve the Lord who called me. On Sunday next I will again say 'Yes' Lord take me as I am, make me what you want me to be. My dear people, I would welcome your prayer that the Lord may bless the 'Yes' I will offer on Sunday next, and that my ministry may be blessed as I set out on my journey as your bishop. Pray that I will be aware of the presence of God every day in the people I encounter. In particular, I ask you to pray that I will be a humble and holy, creative and courageous bishop of your diocese. Be assured that I will be carrying you in prayer and in my heart each day as your bishop. I pray that God will watch over us all day in day out. May the Lord keep us safe on our journey with each other and with Him.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

Saint Kieran, pray for us.

Saint Canice, pray for us.

I remain,

Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dermot Farrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping underline.

Dermot Farrell,

Bishop-Elect of Ossory.