

Memorial for Christchurch New Zealand, Islamic Centre of Ireland, Blanchardstown, Dublin

Address by Dr Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin, March 22nd 2019

SYMPATHY AND SADNESS

One week later and the whole world is still trying to come to terms with the death of so many people at prayer in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. My priority is to express sympathy and sadness both on my own behalf and on behalf of all who journey with me in sorrow. I do so as a fellow human being and also on behalf of the Church of Ireland and the Christian tradition. I express such sympathy and sadness along with a deep sense of outrage and tragedy that even one person at prayer should die through calculated and premeditated violence. I express it to the Muslim people of New Zealand, the total population of New Zealand and to the Muslim people of Ireland with whom I have had the privilege and opportunity to work creatively and constructively for almost ten years now. I thank you and Dr Umar for inviting me here today to your Prayers.

SYMPATHY, SADNESS AND SOLIDARITY

The sympathy and sadness I share with you comes also with solidarity. It is a solidarity that transcends geography and time; it is a solidarity that unites race and gender, older and younger; it is a solidarity that confronts the invasion of wilful violence into the spaces of peaceable prayer. Among the Christian Scriptures, the Gospel of John makes much of the words abide and abode. Those who were killed last Friday had made their abode in New Zealand; they were part of the fabric of Christchurch; they lived there. Repeatedly public figures in New Zealand have spoken of them being us and of us being them. This living example of inclusion has gone out right around the world as an inspiration and it is being upheld and sustained as the full horror of this tragedy sinks in.

INTER FAITH CHARTER

Here in Dublin we have been fortunate and blessed to have The Dublin Inter Faith Charter of 2016. It is a ground breaking initiative of The Dublin Inter Faith Forum and Dublin City Council through the energy of The Lord Mayor of the day, Councillor Brendan Carr. The Charter is a commitment to shared values and to shared actions. The values and the actions interact and infuse each other and they draw together the best of human aspiration in the best of human hope. Members of a very broad range of World Faiths who abide here and who make up the fabric of this city and its citizens are signatories to The Charter. It was the first of its kind in Europe and within days it was taken up by other European cities. The Charter itself is a series of verbs, words of action, with the shared intention to give voice to shared solidarity:

- To commit
- To dedicate
- To promote
- To share
- To encourage

To focus
To develop
To create.

These are rich and generous words and they build cohesion and they create societies of inclusion and of expression. Deep within them lies the commitment ‘to encourage dialogue between peoples of different beliefs and faiths in all spheres of life, to eradicate misunderstanding, intolerance and exclusion, and extend openness and understanding between our different faith communities.’ And this is not confined to people who might conveniently be sidelined as religious in a state such as ours that has already transitioned to being post-secular but that is still largely driven structurally and politically by secular presuppositions and outcomes. The Charter commits ‘to create social conditions that will allow all to share peace, joy and hope.’ The Charter is a pledge of solidarity, on the part of those who pray, to a pluralist and post-secular society and an expression of our commitment to contribute – if we are allowed by inclusion to do so.

FAITH AND SOCIETY

We will all be aware that my Roman Catholic counterpart, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, during this week raised the issue of the newly envisioned church-state dialogue which formed part of the public conversation between an Taoiseach and Pope Francis last summer. He effectively asked where it had disappeared. My suggestion to us today is that church-state is insufficient, partial and inadequate in contemporary Ireland. Irish society today challenges almost every form of dominant conformism. And it does so on sound philosophical presuppositions. If we start from the observation that: my centre is your margin and your margin is my centre, we start also with the realization that: I am An Other to those whom I call Other. Christchurch, in all its devastation and in all its tragedy, has injected a further perspective that will not go away: they are we and we are they. The diversity of Faiths needs to be integral to the new dialogue in Ireland as elsewhere in the world. We need once again to work together to this goal and with a renewed energy. Our challenge is the real work of pulling together, with all stakeholders and policy makers, secular, religious and political, the areas in between you and me, the areas in between us who are all too easily divided into being Other to each Other. People of faith, people of society together can do this through human curiosity, human hospitality and human understanding. We need each other to build and to maintain a dynamic society of diversity, inclusion and expression in Ireland today.

SILENCE AND JUSTICE

A friend of mine is engaged in research on silence and justice in the life and the values of Millennials. We could all do well to hold together silence and justice on a day when we commemorate loss and fear, life and death on the part of people like us whose lives were cut down and whose families and communities were devastated in Christchurch, New Zealand on Friday 15 March 2019. It is on the other side of the world. It is also simply next door. A globalized world has seen to this. Our silence lets God speak to us and it lets

us hear the voice of God. God's justice draws us into a realm beyond our personal loss and limitations and comes to meet us in our bereavement and shattering.