

# Installation of Dermot Farrell as Archbishop of Dublin

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## Homily of Bishop Dermot Farrell at Mass of Thanksgiving on the Occasion of his Installation as Archbishop of Dublin

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**“Today, I stand before you more than aware of my own inadequacies. But you and I also stand before God, the giver of gifts ... faith asks us to see life’s difficulties as a time of grace” – Archbishop Farrell**

Today’s Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is the story of a young woman and a young man who give thanks to God for the gift of their child. It is also the story of two prophetic figures – an older woman and an older man – who recognised the significance of what was unfolding before their eyes. It is on this day that I embrace the ministry which has been entrusted to me by the Church: this morning I assume my role as Bishop of this diocese.

Today, I stand before you more than aware of my own inadequacies. But you and I also stand before God, the giver of gifts (see Matt 6:25–33), who is our hope and our help (see Pss 61:5, 26:1). It is a daunting task, but I am sufficiently acquainted with the calls of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Mary and others to realise that the enormity of the challenge is more than matched by the power of the One who has called me. Like Mary and the prophets of old, in the depth of my shortcomings, I also am called to trust the words of Abraham, our father in faith: “God will provide” (see Gen 22:8, 14). The God who calls us all can be counted on to empower us to respond generously to the call in this local Church.

I am happy to embrace this new mission. I come to you with hope in my heart. It is not a naive hope that everything will be better tomorrow, but a hope born of a conviction that transcends these difficult days through which we are living, and a hope that transcends the limits our own capabilities. Faith is not an invitation to put up with life's difficulties and frustrations. Rather, faith asks us to see these as a time of grace. This time – both in the crisis that is the global pandemic, and in the many crises confronting the Church – this very time, with all its frustration and fear, is rich with possibilities, already carrying the future, overflowing with Christ (see Walter Burghardt, *Sir, We Would Like to See Jesus*, p. 36). What we do in the coming months and years, how we live out of these challenges and opportunities, will define who we really are as a people of faith. We must embrace the future: after all, today *and* tomorrow are God's gift to us. Christ goes before his disciples: we follow. Rooted in our heritage, rooted in who we have become, Christ calls us forward (see Matt 4:19, Mark 1:38, John 21:15–18, Gal 1:15–16). The living “Church is always on the move, always going out and never withdrawn into itself. Jesus did not come to bring a gentle evening breeze, but to light a fire on the earth [see Luke 12:49]” (Pope Francis, *Homily at the Opening of the Amazon Synod*, October 6, 2019).

Today is also the day that the Church celebrates the World Day of Consecrated Life, an occasion to thank the Lord for the gift of lives given to God – lifetimes of service, of commitment to the service of the Gospel and the mission of the Church, and of prophetic witness to the presence and significance of Jesus.

I am particularly happy to take up this new role on the World Day of Consecrated Life. The women and men who dedicate their lives to the call of the gospel are at the heart of life of our Church. Without their service, without the presence of their communities, our church would be a very different Church. They have been at the forefront of renewal in the Church, taking bold initiatives, and making significant sacrifices, putting flesh on the hope that was within them (see 1 Peter 3:15). This is not a mission that belongs to the past. In another age, they were at the forefront of addressing the educational, social, and health of those who risked being left behind. Today they continue their prophetic ministry in the service of those whom our society might prefer not to see: those who suffer from addiction, those who struggle to put food on the table, women trafficked, those without a roof over their heads, or a front door of their own. They make bold to assert that Christians “must realise that their responsibility within creation and their duty toward nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith” (Saint Pope John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1990).

We face the formidable task of ‘preparing the way of the Lord’ (see Mal 3:1—the First Reading of today’s Mass) for the next generation, of discerning what is life-giving in the faith patrimony of the Church, and most of all, of appropriately and effectively bringing good news to the people of our time” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 40). This will not happen unless people of faith are capable of dialogue with society and culture. This dialogue is vital for the life of the Church that calls itself “Catholic.” How blind we would be to ignore the world! Are not “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted,” are these not “the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ?” (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* §1). Are they not the joys and hopes, the griefs and worries of Christ himself? (see John 15:11, Luke 24:11, John 11:35, Matt 26:38, Matt 27:46). Through the working of the Spirit, through the Church – the community of believers – Christ continues to come into our history, into our time; it is women and men who are “capable of speaking with God, of entering into God’s mystery” who make Christ accessible to the culture, and extend the reality of Christ into the world (see, Pope Francis, Homily on Feast of St Joseph, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020). We still need the wisdom and experience, the generosity and prayer, of those whom the Lord has called to consecrate their lives in love of Him and in the service of their sisters and brothers. We need your guidance and example in finding the right balance between word and silence, between action and acceptance.

I look forward to your ongoing collaboration and support, as *together* we continue to serve the people of the Diocese. “How important it is to dream *together*... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built *together*” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 8). Everyone in this diocese – laity, priests and deacons, religious, all who embrace apostolic charisms, as well as the women and men called to a more contemplative way – has something essential to contribute to the future of the faith in Dublin.

It is the future of the faith that calls us. “If everything remains as it was, if we spend our days content that ‘this is the way things have always been,’ then [God’s] gift vanishes, smothered by the ashes of fear, and by the anxiety of defending the *status quo*” (Pope Francis, *Homily at Opening of the Amazon Synod*, October 6, 2019). Rather than being focused short-sightedly on the glory of the past, and the magnificent institutions which our sisters and brothers before us built – old wineskins, to use the Lord’s phrase – we need to accept the responsibility of mission as we experience it now.

It is *how* we embrace this mission that is going to make the difference. We can only do this together. Walking together is the way of community. “Walk[ing] together is the *constitutive way* of the Church” (Pope Francis, Address at the Opening of the 70th General Assembly of the Italian Bishops’ Conference, May 22, 2017). It was the way for the disciples who followed Jesus in Galilee: they walked *with* him (see Mark 3:14). It was

the way for the disciples on the road to Emmaus – who walked with the stranger in their day of disappointment and confusion (see Luke 24:18). And walking together is the way for the Church in our time. We walk with each other and we walk with our Lord. We need his presence and his word “in order to know what the Spirit, the ‘Spirit of Truth’ (John 14:17), ‘says to the Churches’ (Rev 2:7)” (Pope Francis, Address during the Commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops [17 October, 2015]).

Hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches is no easy matter. There is no infallible way. But there is a clear way, a tried and trusted way. That way is a way *with each other* – *slí le chéile*. The Church of the future, the *living* Church of the future, will [have to] be a synodal church, or it will not be at all. We will have to be “a Church that listens to the faithful people of God, the priest, the bishop, the Holy Father; all listening to each other; all listening to the Holy Spirit [Pope Francis, Address to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2015]. It is an illusion to envisage a plan of evangelisation which is carried out only by clergy while the rest of the faithful are merely onlookers. The mission of the Church, the work of God, is not just the responsibility of a group of professionals; it is the call and responsibility of every baptised person whose active participation in the mission of the Church is to be considered indispensable and necessary (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, Ch. 2). In this light, the active participation of the laity becomes essential. They constitute the vast majority of the people of God. Indeed, as Saint John Henry Newman, remarked perceptively, “The Church would seem foolish without them” (*On the Consultation of the Faithful on Matters of Doctrine*). In this light, leadership in the Church is not about telling people what to do; rather it is about promoting co-responsibility and overcoming the mindset which runs the risk of relegating the baptised to a subordinate role, effectively keeping them on the edges of Church life. That is what we mean by a synodal Church—a church on the way with each other. The very first place synodality is expressed is at parish level. If it doesn’t happen in the parish, it will not happen at all!

In that light, the only viable pastoral plan for the future will be the plan which comes from a genuine dialogue and discernment between the people, clergy and religious. That will involve not only working together in new ways, but getting to know each other anew. If I may turn L.P. Hartley’s famous phrase on its head: “the future is a different country, *we* must do things differently there!” This is not to forget the past, and especially not the painful past where so many were hurt because our Church lost its hunger for the Kingdom and its justice (see Matt 6:33) We must never again put what we consider the needs of the Church before the needs of the little ones (see Matt 18:3–7). Whenever that happens, “the Church is living for itself, instead of being a sign of salvation for all” (Karl Rahner, *Faith in Wintry Season* [1990]).

But the future is God's gift to us. I come to Dublin knowing very few of you. But such is our experience all through life: we come to new places, we meet new people, and we are changed, we are enriched. We live in new ways. There is no pre-packaged plan to address the reality in which we find ourselves. There is a direction; there are way markers, we know them well: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (see Gal 5:22–23). They call us to build, or to re-build parishes marked by welcome, openness, forgiveness, resilience, and courage. They call to the service of communities which put flesh on new ways of living in our common home (see in particular, *Laudato Si* §2), and of praising the One who gives us life (see John 6:33). We pray today for all those who have responsibilities in the Church, for clergy, religious and contemplatives, for members of our faith communities, for all those involved in Catholic education and the social mission of the Church, that they receive the same graces: listening and hearing, accompanying and serving.

I am grateful to His Excellency, Archbishop Jude Okolo, the Holy Father's representative in Ireland, for his kindness, his humanity, and his infectious spirit of joy. Archbishop, please convey our gratitude to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, for the ministry of unity that he humbly and faithfully performs for all in the midst of the contradictions of the world.

To Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, I publicly and sincerely express gratitude. Throughout my years working in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth – of which he is a Trustee, and as a member of the Episcopal Conference, and more recently in preparation for today, he has been most supportive, and fraternal. I want to reiterate, what I said on December 29<sup>th</sup>: you saw profoundly the woundedness of the Body of Christ, and provided forceful and unambiguous leadership, especially in the safeguarding of children where you took courageous positions. The Church and wider society owe you a profound debt of gratitude. We must do everything “never to slip back.”

I began this, my first homily as archbishop of Dublin, by acknowledging my gratitude to the clergy, religious and lay faithful. I close it by thanking God for all those who have been part of my vocation journey. I owe a debt of gratitude to my late parents, Carmel and Dermot, my brother and sisters, neighbours, friends, teachers, the people of the parishes of Castletown-Geoghegan, Mullingar, Tullamore and Dunboyne, the students and staff of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth and the Pontifical Irish College, Rome, and to the people, priests and bishops of the Dioceses of Meath and Ossory and my brother bishops. In multiplicity of ways, each of you has formed me for this new ministry and witnessed for me what true priestly ministry could and should be.

Like Mary, the Mother of the Lord, we have to find our place in God's story. I entrust my episcopal ministry to the motherly care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and patroness of this Pro-Cathedral.

Be assured of my prayer for you even as I ask for yours for me. Saint Laurence O'Toole, pray for us. Saint Kevin, pray for us. May God bless our Archdiocese of Dublin. Amen.

+Dermot Farrell

Archbishop of Dublin

**You can watch back the installation of Dermot Farrell as Archbishop of Dublin Watch & Listen Live | Archdiocese of Dublin (dublindioocese.ie)**

The installation of Dermot Farrell as Archbishop of Dublin will take place tomorrow Tuesday 2 February in St. Mary's Pro Cathedral at 10.30. The Principal Celebrant will be Archbishop Farrell, he will be joined by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and His Excellency Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland.

Ahead of the Mass of Thanksgiving Archbishop Farrell said, "Since my appointment by Pope Francis on 29 December, I have been overwhelmed by the good wishes and support extended to me as I embark upon my new ministry as Archbishop of Dublin. I am acutely conscious that, to be effective, my broad pastoral role will require collaboration with many people and will involve difficult decisions. I will continue to keep you all in my prayers and I ask that you please pray that the Holy Spirit will help guide and strengthen me in my new role as Archbishop."

Due to public health restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, this will not be a public Mass. However, you are invited to participate in the Mass which will be livestreamed on the cathedral webcam [Watch & Listen Live | Archdiocese of Dublin \(dublindioocese.ie\)](https://www.dublindioocese.ie) as well as on the Facebook page of the Archdiocese of Dublin. [Archdiocese of Dublin | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/dublindioocese)

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## **Life and ministry of Archbishop-elect Dermot Farrell:**

Dermot Farrell was born in 1954, the eldest of seven children of the late Dermot and Carmel Farrell, in Garthy, Castletown-Geoghegan, Co Westmeath, in the Diocese of the Meath.

After his primary education in Castletown-Geoghegan and Streamstown, he attended Saint Finian's College, Mullingar. In September 1972 he began his studies for the priesthood at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, obtaining a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1976, as part of his philosophical studies. During his theological studies he was awarded a Bachelor in Divinity Degree in 1979 and a licence in Theology in 1981, both by the Pontifical University, Maynooth.

He was ordained to the priesthood in Saint Michael's Church, Castletown-Geoghegan on 7 June 1980.

Upon the completion of his studies he was appointed as Curate in the Cathedral Parish of Christ the King, Mullingar. In 1985 he began doctoral studies in the Gregorian University and, in 1988, was awarded a Doctoral Degree in Theology, for a dissertation entitled: *The Dogmatic Foundations of Bernard Häring's Thought on Christian Morality as a Sacramental Way of Life*.

His final year in Rome also saw him serving as a Director of Formation in the Pontifical Irish College.

Following his return from Rome he was appointed Curate in Tullamore Parish and in 1989-90 he began lecturing in Moral Theology at Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth. In 1990 the Maynooth College Trustees appointed him Executive Assistant to the President of College and to membership of the Faculty of Theology, holding the post of Director of the one-year Religious Studies Programme. In 1993 he was appointed Vice-President of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, and in 1996 was appointed President of the College, a position he held until his retirement in 2007.

In 1997 he was named as an Honorary Prelate of his Holiness. From September 2007 until 2018 he served as Parish Priest of Dunboyne and Kilbride Parish, Co Meath, and was appointed Vicar General of the Diocese of Meath in 2009.

Bishop Farrell has extensive administrative experience: he has served on various boards and committees, among them, the Board of Allianz plc; the Governing Body of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth; the Theological Department Irish Inter-Church Committee, and as National Director of the Permanent Diaconate, and he is currently Chairman of Veritas Communications.

His appointment as Bishop of Ossory by Pope Francis was announced on 3 January 2018, and he was ordained bishop in Saint Mary's Cathedral, Kilkenny, on 11 March 2018.

He was elected Finance Secretary of the Irish Bishops' Conference in March 2019.

The Holy Father Pope Francis appointed Archbishop-elect Dermot Farrell as Archbishop of Dublin on 29 December 2020.

Bishop Farrell's episcopal motto *Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini* ('Our help is in the name of the Lord') is taken from Psalm 124.

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