

ADDRESS BY ARCHBISHOP SEÁN BRADY

Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland

On the Announcement that he is to be Created a Cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI

*Given in the Synod Hall, St. Patrick's Cathedral Armagh
Wednesday 17th October 2007*

Ladies & Gentlemen,

First of all, thank you for coming here. This is a day of great joy for the Archdiocese of Armagh, for the Church in Ireland and for me personally, and I am very grateful to you for carrying the news of this announcement by Pope Benedict XVI.

Last Sunday, when I was leaving to celebrate the 11 o'clock Mass in the Cathedral, I received a telephone call from the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Lazarotto. He said that he wanted to tell me some good news. When we met later that evening he informed me that the Holy Father Pope Benedict would soon announce a Consistory and that the news would bring great joy to Ireland. When he confirmed that my name was to be among those announced, I was taken aback. I had heard the usual speculation about a Consistory, but I did not expect it to take place so soon. I certainly did not expect Ireland to be included on this occasion. After all, this will be the first time in history that Ireland will have three Cardinals.

As I began to take in what the Nuncio had said, my thoughts turned to those many, many people I know throughout the Church in Ireland – priests and lay faithful, young and old, religious and bishops, married people and missionaries – those who give their lives on a daily basis to make God's love more visible in the world. My sincere hope is that they will see this announcement as a recognition by the Holy Father of their faith, life and work.

Anyone who knows Pope Benedict will be aware that he is a man of transparent humility and gentleness. On the day he was elected Pope he described himself as “a simple and humble worker in the Lord's vineyard.” In my own visits to Rome I have come to know him as someone who lives this out in every aspect of his daily life and work. He has a profound sense of the importance of the particular vocation of each and every person in the Church. This is why I have no hesitation in saying that in honouring me in this way the Holy Father wishes to honour the whole Church in Ireland, especially those whose service of the Lord is lived out in the ordinary and often hidden circumstances of everyday life. This announcement is about them – about the families and individuals who in spite of the great challenges faced by the Church in Ireland in recent years, of the many reasons to feel hurt or unheard or uncertain, have remained faithful to the message of Jesus in their everyday lives. I hope that all who are persevering in living the faith will find new heart in this expression of confidence by the Holy Father, not so much in me as in the whole Church in Ireland at this time.

I would like to acknowledge the many expressions of support and good wishes received from across Ireland today. I am very grateful to the President of Ireland, Mrs Mary McAleese, to An Taoiseach and the Irish Government, to the various members of Dáil Éireann and the Seanad. I am also grateful to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and the various members of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly for their warm congratulations. I also gratefully acknowledge the kind sentiments of support conveyed by the British Government. I feel humbled in the face of such compelling good wishes and support on the part of our political community. I assure all those with political and civic responsibility of my continued commitment to working with them for the common good of the whole of this island, with due regard for our distinct areas of responsibility.

I hope that those who have worked so hard to establish peace in recent years will see in this honour a further expression of Pope Benedict's confidence in what has been achieved in Northern Ireland. Recently the Holy Father expressed his hope that the peace which is already bringing renewed hope in Northern Ireland will inspire others across the world to recognise that only forgiveness, reconciliation, and mutual respect can bring lasting peace. I know that the continued success of the political institutions in Northern Ireland and the effort to move to the deeper dimensions of reconciliation, are matters close to the heart of the Pope. I believe this announcement is in part an expression of his desire to see that process continue to succeed and become a model for the rest of the world.

I have learnt so much in recent years about the importance of dialogue, listening to others and showing respect. I wish to take this opportunity to thank all those from the Protestant community who have sent me their good wishes today. I thank the other Archbishop of Armagh, Archbishop Alan Harper who telephoned me this morning to convey his good wishes. I also thank the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Dr John Finlay, and the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev Roy Cooper, for their good wishes. It has been a privilege for me to have been part of the work of the four main Church Leaders over the past eleven years. I hope that they will see in this announcement a renewed expression of the commitment of the Catholic Church to the vital work of ecumenical dialogue, and greater understanding and reconciliation between the various traditions of Northern Ireland.

In making this announcement I believe the Holy Father wishes to acknowledge what he described in his address to the Bishops of Ireland last October during our *Ad Limina* visit as the ‘outstanding contribution that Ireland has made to the life of the Church’. In honouring the See of St. Patrick I believe he wishes to pay tribute to what he described on that same occasion as ‘the constant witness of countless generations of Irish people to their faith in Christ and their fidelity to the Holy See.’

For my part, as successor to Patrick in the historic See of Armagh, may I quote Patrick from his fifth century *Confession*: ‘Who am I, O Lord, and to what have you called me, you who assisted me with such divine power that today I constantly exalt and magnify your name... So indeed I must accept with serenity whatever befalls me, be it good or evil, and always give thanks to God, who taught me to trust in Him always without hesitation, and who must have heard my prayer so that I... dared to undertake such a holy and wonderful work.’

I am deeply humbled and at the same time honoured that the Holy Father has called me to such a holy and wonderful work in service of the Universal Church. In the words of Pope Benedict to the Bishops of Ireland last year, my constant mission must be to “be bold in speaking of the joy that comes from following Christ.” With my fellow bishops here in Ireland I echo the Pope’s call to “correct the idea that Catholicism is merely a collection of prohibitions” and to “emphasize the Good News, the life-giving and life-enhancing message of the Gospel.” My hope is that this appointment will in some sense help people to appreciate again the value of the heritage of their Christian faith. I hope it will bring a renewed sense of the unity we share in Baptism, especially among the young. The future belongs to those who speak with authentic hope. The Christian message offers that hope to the world. That hope calls us to a deeper solidarity as a human family.

Today's announcement further deepens the bonds of communion between the Universal Church and the Church in Ireland. That communion is expressed in the first instance through the vital relationship between the Pope and each Bishop across the world. As President of the Irish Bishops' Conference, I want to thank all my brother Bishops in the Conference for their good wishes and support as well as their prayers, not just today but since I first came to Armagh. They perhaps more than others will understand how much I will need such prayers as I undertake my new responsibilities on behalf of the Church.

On this day when I give thanks to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for the privilege of being a priest of the Catholic Church, I wish to acknowledge with love and gratitude the people who played a profound part in forming whatever human and spiritual values have led me to this day. I am thinking first of my late mother Annie and father Andrew Brady. I am thinking of the priest who baptised me and brought me into the life of the Church, of the other priests who inspired me and taught me the joy of following Christ. I want to thank my brother Con and my sister Kitty and their spouses Bernadette and Gus, and my niece and nephews. As well as keeping my feet firmly on the ground, my family's support and common sense have been a tower of strength to me throughout my priestly life. I want to express my particular gratitude to the priests and people of my home Parish of Laragh in County Cavan, to the community of St. Patrick's College, Cavan, where I was student and teacher, to St. Patrick's College, Maynooth where I studied, and to the Pontifical Irish College where I was both student and Rector. I hope that priests, religious and seminarians, and young people across Ireland will find renewed encouragement in this expression of confidence by the Holy Father in the faith and future of the Church in Ireland. I salute the people of Ballyhaise where I was Parish Priest.

And finally, I thank the priests and people of the Archdiocese of Armagh, who have been so welcoming and supportive over these past twelve years. I cannot adequately express what a privilege it is for me to serve as their Bishop. They are represented here today by my faithful co-worker and Auxiliary Bishop, Gerard Clifford, Ms Kate Acton, Armagh Diocesan Youth Director, and Mr Peter Gildea of the Armagh Parish Pastoral Council.

Finally, as I prepare to be created a Cardinal in Rome next month by Pope Benedict on the weekend of the Solemnity of Christ the King, I would appeal to everyone of goodwill to remember me in their prayers. Pray that this good work which the Lord has begun, through his grace and not mine, may be brought to fulfilment. Pray that I may be a worthy shepherd of the Lord's flock. Pray also that Ireland will be renewed in its faith and that the Kingdom of God will reign among us – an eternal and universal kingdom:

a kingdom of truth and life,

a kingdom of holiness and grace,

a kingdom of justice, love, and peace (*Preface of Christ the King*).

Thank you.