

MESSAGE OF WELCOME BY BISHOP GERARD CLIFFORD,

AUXILIARY BISHOP OF ARMAGH,

AT MASS IN ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, ARMAGH

THURSDAY 29 November 2007

Your Eminence Cardinal Brady, 'Cead mile failte romhat abhaile'. Welcome home to Armagh. On behalf of Cardinal Daly, the priests and lay people of Armagh and the many friends gathered here tonight I welcome you back to the Archdiocese of Armagh.

Over recent weeks and, in particular, over recent days many tributes have been paid to your leadership of the Church in Armagh and in Ireland. All of them have been richly deserved. I do not intend to rehearse the many accolades paid to you from representatives of Church and State. Suffice it to say that those tributes speak of your deep faith, your generosity of spirit, your modesty and your decency. More than anything they have spoken of your single-mindedness in your commitment to the Church in Armagh and to the Church in Ireland.

Today Armagh and Ireland are both very proud of the great honour bestowed upon you by Pope Benedict XVI in appointing you to the College of Cardinals. It is indeed a great honour. It is also a great responsibility. In the ceremonies in Rome over the weekend Pope Benedict reminded all of the 23 new Cardinals of your call to the service to the Church worldwide. It is an honour. It is also a call to the service of the Church.

All of that is well expressed in the symbols of your office. The Red Hat and the fisherman's ring express your new responsibilities graphically. The Red Hat (the Biretta) is a symbol of your commitment for life to the People of God. The deep red of your Cardinal's Hat expresses the challenge to a life-long commitment in the service of the Church. The bestowal of the ring is the symbol of the new responsibility for the Church worldwide. It is a call to a new evangelisation of the People of God; the challenge to bring the message of God's love to all. It is a message that is particularly challenging in today's world where many feel rejected by society and by the Church. It is a call to answer the plea of those dearly awaiting the message of love and care; those on the margins of society, those who are victims of greed, those victims of war and want, those isolated and marginalised in our society.

We call you Cardinal, suggesting that in your new role you will open doors of opportunity for many, that you will be available as an advisor to those seeking help and encouragement. You will also be one of the College of Cardinals called to elect a new Pope whenever that may be. It is all a great honour and a great privilege.

Since you came to Armagh thirteen years ago you have been the friend and ally of many. There has always been an open door for those who sought your counsel. In your new responsibility there will be many calling on you for direction and guidance. There will be many looking towards that open door, not least those seeking answers to the injustices in our world, those weighed down by poverty and deprivation, those looking for answers to the pressures of family

life, those marginalised in our society, the new Irish, the new migrants seeking a rightful place in our community. I am confident that many will find courage and comfort from your leadership.

There are many for whom you have already been an attentive listener. I think of your ongoing work for ecumenism at local and national level. Tonight representatives from the main Christian Churches gather in your honour. The welcome extended to you in recent weeks by the leaders of the various Churches and denominations expresses the good will and harmonious relationships you have already fostered in our country. It is a work that continues to challenge all men and women of goodwill.

Those divided from us politically and historically have already found you to be a respectful listener. They have found a friend, an ally, someone unthreatening who is willing to listen and to learn. We thank God for the progress made in the political situation in Northern Ireland in recent months. All of us are aware that the building of permanent peace and of confidence does not happen overnight. It is slow, painstaking and laborious work. I am confident that the friendships you have helped to build over the years will continue to bear fruit and that the longed-for peace that we pray for and work for will in time be permanently established in our country.

On Sunday next we celebrate the beginning of Advent, the beginning of our preparation for the feast of Christmas. The liturgy of these days will challenge all of us 'to prepare a way for the Lord'. We can do that in prayer and in our daily lives. I believe that your elevation to the College of Cardinals challenges all of us to commit ourselves once more to preparing a place for the Lord in our lives and in our work.

On behalf of the Church in Armagh and all those here tonight I congratulate you on your appointment as Cardinal. I assure you of our constant prayers and support in the many challenges that lie ahead and I wish God's blessing on you as you minister to the People of God. May God bless you in your new endeavours and reward your ministry generously. Guim rath De ort and ar do shaothar. I pray God's blessing on you and on your work.

ENDS