

26 November 2022

My dear friends,

I am honoured that His Holiness, Pope Francis has appointed me as Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union. I have accepted this appointment and, with God's grace, I will seek to carry out this mission which has been entrusted to me.

Over the last 14 years, I have served you as Bishop in the Diocese of Down and Connor and it is with a very heavy heart that I take up this new appointment. I have so many fond memories of my time here and particularly of all the clergy, religious and the people whom I have met and who have supported me with their advice and expertise. I will always value and consider my time in Down and Connor as a blessing from God. I remember and am so grateful for your warm welcome upon my arrival in the diocese. It has been a privilege and a blessing to have been a Bishop with you and for you.

I have been deeply inspired by the faith, hope and resilience of the clergy and people of this Diocese over these years. Understandably, I shall be sad to move on, but as I take up this new appointment, I am encouraged by the friendship and support of parishioners, the countless volunteers who support the life of the Church in our Diocese in so many areas, as well as of friends and family. The pastoral initiatives that we crafted and took together over those years will, I hope, continue to sustain the life of our diocese and its parishes into the future. My heartfelt thanks go to one and all, for your many kindnesses.

I am profoundly appreciative of all the friendship and guidance I have received in my ministry from fellow bishops, especially Bishop Patrick Walsh, Bishop Anthony Farquhar and Bishop Donal McKeown with whom I have served. I have valued greatly the fraternity and pastoral support of the clergy and religious, priests and deacons, of the Diocese. Notwithstanding the challenges we all face on a daily basis with declining numbers of clergy and increasing pastoral pressures, they demonstrate a faith-filled commitment and self-less determination to serving the people of God and those in need. From my heart, I thank them all, bishops, clergy, religious and laity and I ask God's continued blessing on their ministries. My thoughts are also with all those in formation as they discern their calling to ministry within the Diocese.

I pay tribute to the work of the 'Living Church' project, and all who have developed this pastoral initiative. This project, linked to other initiatives such as the work of the Vicars Forane, has nurtured a shared sense of mission among our parishes to ensure that the diocese continues to meet the pastoral and sacramental needs of parishioners for decades to come.

I acknowledge the professional expertise and guidance I have received from all those who have worked in and with the Diocesan Safeguarding Office and services since their establishment. I appreciate and salute the countless volunteers across the diocese who tirelessly and continually give of their time and energy to ensure that the Church is a safer place for children and adults at risk.

I thank the Diocesan Trustee Board, my colleagues within the diocesan Curia and all those within the various diocesan agencies, its Councils and Commissions, and all the dedicated staff, past and present, with whom I have worked over the years in the diocesan offices, its services and at the Bishop's

House, Lisbreen. These diocesan agencies and personnel have established strong foundations for the future of the diocese and I pray that God may continue to bless this work in the years ahead.

I am deeply appreciative of the work of the many voluntary agencies, organisations, associations and lay apostolates who continue to enrich the pastoral life of the Diocese.

I have enjoyed the friendship of Church leaders, clergy and parishioners of other Christian churches and representatives of other world faiths. Their commitment to the ongoing work of encounter and dialogue has made such a significant contribution to the pathway of conflict resolution and peace in Northern Ireland.

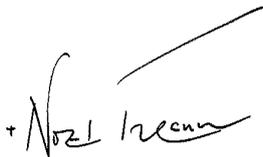
I thank all those in public office, government departments, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, and the many public representatives with whom I have had the privilege to collaborate over the last 14 years for their co-operation in discerning and addressing the needs and concerns of all citizens.

For many years, I have followed closely the work of the European Union, having served first as a staff member of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) and then as its General Secretary (1993-2008). Since 2009, I have represented the Irish Bishops as a member of COMECE and as one of its Vice-Presidents. Since 2018, I have also served as President of Justice and Peace Europe.

This appointment as Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union comes at a time when the world and the EU, in particular, face great challenges. In the midst of war, political and financial instability, conflict and societal change, diplomacy plays a key role in facilitating peace, understanding and goodwill among peoples and nations.

I ask for your continued prayers as I take up this appointment in January. I especially invite you to pray for and stand in solidarity with all those who work for peace and the resolution of conflict, protecting human rights and addressing issues of humanitarian need in Europe and throughout the world.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Noël Treanor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

✠ Noël Treanor