



Provincial Office
Order of Carmelites

22nd April 2017

Dear Friends,

The Carmelite Order has had a long association with Knocktopher since our first foundation (White Abbey of Saint Saviour) was established here in the 14th Century. In addition, Carmelites have had pastoral responsibility for the Parish of Ballyhale since the early 1970s.

Over those years, many Carmelites have ministered in both the Priory and in the Parish sharing with you both celebrations of joy and also times of difficulty and bereavement. They all valued and appreciated your warm and generous support during this time.

For several years now, the Carmelite Order in Ireland has been reviewing its pastoral commitments while planning for the future. We have had to recognise and accept that we are an ageing Province with a large number of our men in their seventies and eighties. Our numbers have also significantly reduced in recent years. In fact, looking to the future, it is predicted that in just over twenty years' time that there will be twenty Carmelites in Ireland with an average age of 73 years old. As such it is just not possible for us to continue in all our ministries into the future.

With regret, the Provincial Council, which is responsible for the overall administration of the Order in Ireland and Zimbabwe, has decided that we can no longer maintain a Carmelite community in Knocktopher or continue to fulfil our pastoral responsibility for the Parish of Ballyhale. Sadly, the Carmelites will withdraw from the Carmelite Priory in Knocktopher by the beginning of December 2017 and return the pastoral care of the Parish of Ballyhale to the Diocese of Ossory by the same date.

I know that this is painful and difficult news and this decision was not taken lightly. Given the long tradition and the generous and strong support by the local people over centuries, we realise that this decision will be very disappointing for many of you. Indeed, it is also a difficult time for us as Carmelites, and especially for Fathers Bene, Lar, and Philip. Knocktopher has been home for them during the past number of years and I appreciate their understanding of the decision.

In our meetings with the Diocesan Administrator, he expressed his regret but also his understanding of our decision. The Carmelites will co-operate fully with the Diocese of Ossory as we return the pastoral care of the Parish to the Diocese.

We wish to seek ways in which the Priory can continue as an ongoing place of prayer and be a resource for the local people and the Church in this area. Over the coming months, we would be keen to explore how this might happen and how the personal friendships and links with the Order can be maintained.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide and support us all at this time and we place ourselves under the care of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard Byrne O. Carm." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Richard Byrne, O.Carm.

Prior Provincial and the members of the Provincial Council.