

A Message from Archbishop Bernard Longley

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Bishops of England and Wales have met in prayer and dialogue to respond to the final IICSA* Report into the Catholic Church. The report shows institutional failures on the part of the Church which failed to keep the vulnerable safe from abuse and failed to offer compassionate responses to those who suffered. It is with shame and profound sorrow that we recognise these failures and accept our need for a change of heart. Our first thoughts and prayers must always be for those who have suffered. In their terrible suffering we must also recognise that they are our best teachers on how to improve.

The bishops have also responded to the Elliot Report. This independent review and report was commissioned by the bishops to recommend changes that are necessary to ensure best practice in safeguarding in the Church at every level. Victims/Survivors of abuse in the Church have played a crucial role in presenting the bishops with these necessary recommendations. The bishops have accepted and will implement all the recommendations contained in both the Elliot and the IICSA Reports.

Safeguarding is the work of all of us in the Church. I wish to thank all the volunteers and clergy in our parishes who help to ensure that they are safe places for all-comers. The IICSA Report acknowledges the vast improvements over the last 20 years in safeguarding practices. The acceptance and implementation of the Elliott Review recommendations will help us all improve further. The Bishops' Conference, under the leadership of Cardinal Vincent, is committed to improve our practices and our responses to those who have suffered.

Abuse has no place in the Church. The Archdiocese will always report allegations to and co-operate fully with the police and statutory agencies. I invite anyone who has suffered abuse to contact the police or if appropriate to contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team: safeguarding@rc-birmingham.org.

I would encourage you to read the Bishops' Statement in full.

Thank you for your prayers for all those who have suffered abuse, within and beyond the Church, as well as for Cardinal Vincent and the bishops at this important moment.

With my prayers and every kind wish.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

+ Bernard

November 2020

[*Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse]