

CHURCH OF IRELAND

PRESS RELEASE

All correspondence to:
ALAN S. JOHNSTON, Press Officer, 4 Greenview Park, Belfast BT9 6TZ -- Telephone 610444

CONNOR DIOCESAN SYNOD

This will be held in St. Nicholas' Parish Hall, Belfast (junction of Lisburn Road and Cadogan Park) on Wednesday, 23rd September beginning at 2.15 p.m. after Holy Communion in the parish church.

Attached is extract from the Address by the Bishop, the Right Rev. Arthur Butler which is EMBARGOED until it is delivered. This will be the last synod for Bishop Butler before he retires on 30th September.

Your attendance at the Synod, including photographic coverage, would be greatly appreciated.

18th September, 1981.

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE PRESS OFFICER.

Embargoed till 3.30 p.m.

Extract from Presidential Speech of the Right Reverend A. H. Butler,
at the Connor Diocesan Synod on Wednesday 23rd September at 3.00 p.m.

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Twelve years ago I was elected to be Bishop of Connor, and I regarded it then as a great privilege. It has remained a great privilege for me to try to serve our Church and the community all through those dark and difficult times. I retire with real regret but with a deep sense of gratitude to clergy and people throughout the community who have given me their friendship and help. In recent days there has been a series of cruel and callous murders which have shocked us all. These have happened presumably as retaliation for what has been occurring over H-Blocks and the hunger-strike, and as part of the continuing campaign of intimidation, bombing and murder. Recent propoganda on the part of those who support the hunger-strike has given the impression that the whole matter has become a vendetta between the strikers and Mrs. Thatcher, and that the rest of us in the Province have no part in it. This is not true. I believe that the protestant community and a large part of the Roman Catholic community is behind the Prime Minister's policy on this issue. Whether one supports her politically or not, we approve and support the stand which has been taken. It is important to say this for a deep moral principle is involved. The principle was stated clearly by the Pope when he said on his visit to Ireland "Murder is murder". Those who believe this to be true take their stand against special category status, prisoner of war status and all that is implied in the five demands. It would be disastrous if the impression should be gained by anyone inside or outside the Province that on this issue the Prime Minister was out on her own and just being inflexible and difficult.

The misery caused in many homes lately is acute and we extend our deepest sympathy to all who have suffered so much. In the face of such suffering the churches have not failed their people but have brought to many in their time of greatest need a renewal of healing and hope and faith.

Our communities are now in a more polarised situation than ever before, and the churches cannot claim much success in breaking down barriers, though I think some of them have attempted more than they have been given credit for. It remains a first duty for all who profess to follow Christ to keep on trying to be reconcilers. This includes such things as trying to understand points of view other than our own, and to agree to disagree on certain matters, yet to remain friends and to give a conscientious answer to the uncomfortable question - "Who is my neighbour?".

CHURCH OF IRELAND PRESS OFFICER

Alan S. Johnston.

With Compliments

~~To Alexander Hunt~~

~~To our passage market~~

To Coleridge

Correspondence to: 4, Greenview Park, Belfast BT9 6TZ. Tel: 610444

Also: Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6. Tel: 978422