

Dear Friends,

In August we will celebrate the World Meeting of Families, a wonderful opportunity for us to appreciate the importance of family life and to reflect on our own families where we should feel safe, nurtured, cherished. The Church too is a family; it is the 'Family of families' as Pope Francis calls it. In this family of Church, we too are nurtured, cherished and need to feel safe. In this family children and young people can also develop to their full potential.

Most young people today are familiar with the internet; it is now part of the process of growing up. We live in a world with wonderful opportunities for us to communicate with each other and the possibility to see what is happening in the present all over the world, this is due to the great advancements in technology and science, via TV and the internet. Pope Francis in his message for World Day for Communications in 2016 said: "The internet can help us to be better citizens. The internet can be used wisely to build a society which is healthy and open to sharing. It can help us to be better people". (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 23).

Last year at the Celebrations of Confirmation I spoke of the choices young people have to make for example 'social media is great but it has its snares for young people'. Social media and the internet can be of great use to us in our communicating. However, we are well aware of the danger the internet poses to children and young people which is evident from recent revelations in the media. It is possible now to abuse a child in their own home without being present physically to them. It is important that parents/guardians be ever vigilant towards their children, their online status and access to the world wide web. Families are meant to be safe places for young people to grow up, with access to social media and the world wide web that safety is threatened. May we all be more aware of the possibility of the internet and the danger that the internet poses to young people and children.

In the family of the Church we too need to be constantly vigilant. The internet now helps us to keep updated in Safeguarding and to ensure best practice for Safeguarding children. In this Diocese we have a dedicated website for Safeguarding Children which contains the Policy and procedures of the Diocese and in the future, we will also have the Safeguarding Statement which is now a legal requirement. I urge all people to look up the website and to read the Statement when it becomes available and to check the website of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

There are a great number of people in the family of the Diocese of Cloyne who are working to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We are indebted to them for this. I encourage you to continue this work and do not be afraid to speak up to help us all ensure best practice in the Diocese.

We continue to work to make things better and to all who have suffered abuse from members of the Church, I once again express my sincere sorrow and my commitment to Safeguarding Children in the Diocese.

I encourage young people to become involved with the Church today. In the words of Pope Francis: "A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity. Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices; do not delay when your conscience asks you to take risks in following the Master. The Church also wishes to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith; even your doubts and your criticism.

Make your voice heard, let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls.” (13/1/2017)

I once again thank everyone involved in the Diocese working for Safeguarding Children. May we all communicate the good news that children and young people are welcomed, nurtured and cherished. May our families be safe places and may the Church, the Family of Christ, be a safe place for the young.

With prayerful good wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read '+ Wm Crean'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

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Most Rev. William Crean, D.D.,  
Bishop of Cloyne