

### **The text of Archbishop Eamon's message:**

Dear brothers and sisters, survivors of abuse,

As I prepare to journey to Rome for the meeting with Pope Francis about safeguarding, I want to assure you that you are uppermost in my thoughts. In recent weeks I have met with some of you and heard about how you were hurt and violated, and about how your young lives were turned into a nightmare by people who betrayed the sacred trust that you and your families had placed in them.

I am truly sorry for what was done to you.

I've learned also about how abuse devastated your confidence in yourself and others, your relationships, your family, and in some cases your spiritual, emotional, mental and physical well-being. Abuse broke your heart and spirit and sometimes you couldn't tell anyone for years. And then – when all you wanted was to be believed and supported by the Church, and your abuser to be stopped from harming others – there were too many failures to listen, to understand, and to do what was right and just.

I am truly sorry for these failures.

No wonder many of you find it difficult to forgive. You are still shocked by every new revelation which reopens your wounds and makes you feel the Church still hasn't learned or fully understood.

Some of you have asked me for prayers, and for the Church to openly express atonement and say "sorry". You rightly demand complete transparency and prompt cooperation with police and statutory authorities. You expect us to maintain robust efforts and standards for the protection of children, to continue to fully involve lay women and men in deciding and overseeing best practice, to independently audit our progress so that we never become complacent. You want our response to be child-centred and open to justice and accountability. You appreciate the counselling and support services offered by Towards Healing and others who have personally and pastorally reached out to you.

As I journey to Rome I realise that you are precious members of the Body of Christ; you always have been and always will be. You deserve to be believed, loved and cherished – not isolated or seen as a threat. I know that nothing I say can undo the terrible wrong you have endured, but I once more commit to doing all I can to ensure that Church activities are as safe as possible for children and vulnerable people. You will always remain in my thoughts and prayers.