

DIOCESE OF MENEVIA



PASTORAL MESSAGE

to the people of the Parishes of
ABERYSTWYTH and ABERAERON

My dear people

You may or may not be aware that when the Trustees of the Diocese took the decision to close St Winefride's church last October, one single parishioner in Aberystwyth reported me, the Bishop, to Rome. The Congregation for Clergy opened an investigation. I am now able to tell you that the Vatican has found in favour of the Bishop's and Trustees' decision to close the church. After a detailed examination of all relevant material, the Holy See in a formal Judgement supports the Diocese's intention to dispose of the site in order to release funds for the building of a new church complex at Penparcau.

In its written Judgement that I have just received, the Congregation recognizes that the Trustees of the Diocese had no choice but to close the church on health and safety grounds. This difficult decision was taken after (I quote from the Vatican Decree): "**the Catholic Church Insurance Association has, of its own volition, commissioned an additional independent structural survey and, on the basis of that survey, considers that the building presents such a danger to people entering it that it must be closed, that access must be denied to it, and that liability insurance cover must be withdrawn**".

The Vatican's Judgement goes on to state that "**The argument of the recurrent (the single parishioner) that the church is not structurally unsound and could be restored in a manner which the parish could afford are not convincing given the weight of the expert evidence presented by the Ordinary (the Bishop)**".

The Congregation has therefore come to the conclusion that "**the grounds proposed by the Ordinary (the Bishop) demonstrating the relative impossibility of repairing the church to be both reasonable and just**".

It continues by asserting that "**The level of debt that would be required for the necessary repair and restoration work to be carried out is so great that it would cause severe harm to the parish, while the proposed alternative provides a new church, presbytery and church hall and leaves the parish with no debt**".

Consequently, the Congregation agrees that **"the financial position of the parish is such that the restoration of the church...is impossible"**. Hence: **"this petition for hierarchical recourse as presented...is therefore rejected both 'de procedendo' (in terms of procedures) and 'de decernendo' (in terms of substance)"**.

Whilst the matter has been in the hands of the Vatican and therefore *sub judice*, the Diocese has maintained its silence and waited patiently. Now that the Judgement has been made, I appeal to all parishioners that, for the good of the Church and the parish, everyone looks forward to a more positive future. Aberystwyth needs a Catholic church. The diocese is ready to commission that project. All options have been tested.

Now, acting as arbitrator in this Church case, the Holy See has given its decision, which supports the Diocese's proposals for a new church. Once again, I confirm that by using the proceeds of sale from the Queen's Road site, a new church can be provided debt-free. It is a wrench to consider leaving a much loved St Winefride's after so long. But I am convinced that you will come to love your new church and appreciate its many facilities. You will be invited to take part in devising its design and layout. You will make it your own. That is right and just.

In the near future, I shall be arranging what I hope will be a mutually convenient gathering in Aberystwyth for any of you who wish to come and speak with me about the future of your parish. In the meantime, please pray that we can all become truly united in our efforts to provide a fitting dwelling for the Lord in our midst. It is long overdue. Let us prepare to give him a new home.

I extend my blessing to each and every one of you, as well as to those who are housebound or in hospital, and I express my thanks for the many prayers and Masses that have been said for a satisfactory outcome to this difficult and long-running case, which the Holy See has now settled.

Yours sincerely

+Thomas Matthew

Bishop of Menevia

*This message is to be read out at all Masses in Aberystwyth and Aberaeron
over the weekend of 27-28 April 2013
and a copy made available on the main notice-board in each location*