

# Message from Bishop Robert

## 14 January 2025



I was fortunate enough to spend two days at the beginning of January visiting the city of Dublin. It was my first time and yes, I did do a tour of the Guinness factory, and I did sample a pint. It was of course delicious, and I am told it tastes better in Dublin than anywhere else in the world!

The hotel in which we stayed was just opposite the General Post Office, the epicentre of the 1916 Easter Rising with its proclamation of independence. The front of the building still shows the marks of the bullets – a reminder of those on both sides killed and injured. We visited the castle while we were there and saw the room in which James Connolly was kept and cared for and where he was visited by his wife and children before he was executed for his part in the Rising after a trial of dubious legal validity. It put me in mind of a visit I made some years ago to one of our partner dioceses in India. The then Bishop told me of how he was not able to enter one of the churches of which he was now bishop because it was for ‘whites only’. These two situations gave me cause to reflect how often England as a nation has been on the wrong side of history. The Irish state for which the rebels of 1916 gave their lives came just a few years after the Easter Rising, a story repeated in India and elsewhere.

These things of course are never simple. History never is. On all sides in war and conflict there will be acts of heroism as well as wrongdoing, there will be legacy of development as well as of suffering, all which shape who we are now. Yet as the popular adage says, those who can’t learn from history are bound to repeat it – it is this lesson that I take, alongside the hospitality of my short visit to Dublin, into the new year.

The uprising in Dublin, as so many conflicts in past times and today, is formed so often by those who are convinced of the rightness of their cause. Such was absolutely true in Dublin in 1916 yet with hindsight, as with apartheid, with slavery and in so many other instances as we look back, we know not everyone was right. As I reflected on how we have so often been on the wrong side of history I was left wondering where might I be mistaken, might I be wrong today, what is it that I need to learn?

I know of course that God is truth, that Jesus is ‘the way the truth and the life’ (John 14 v 6) and that Jesus’ prayer for me and for the Church is that we might be sanctified in that truth, (John 17 v 17) but I know that I am not God. As I read the scriptures and encounter people in every generation wrestling for the truth of God I know I must do likewise as I seek to follow Jesus in the way I live and to share the life that is promised in Jesus for all, a life of self-giving sacrificial love, even to the cross for our redemption.

I begin 2025 determined to spend more time listening first to God, the source of all truth, and being prepared to rely more fully on God’s truth, instead of my own limited perspective.

+ Robert