

Bishop McAreavey accepts Sinn Féin apology but criticises attempt to misrepresent the Church's pro-life position

Bishop John McAreavey, Bishop of Dromore, has today strongly criticised Sinn Féin party political literature for quoting his name and for misrepresenting the pro-life position of the Catholic Church to constituents. Please see full statement below:

When I became aware of party political literature which was jointly issued in the names of Sue Ramsey MLA and Councillor Matt Garrett of Sinn Féin, which stated that I “share” their position on the “termination” of unborn human life, I was appalled. This is an untrue and most damaging assertion. I cannot emphasise enough the seriousness of this action which has misused my good name and impugned the teaching reputation of my ministry as bishop.

Political representatives must answer for their own position on abortion and they should not try to misrepresent the pro-life position of the Catholic Church to their constituents. I greatly appreciate the interventions of Mr Martin McGuinness deputy First Minister and Mr Paul Maskey MP, West Belfast, on this matter and I accept the apology outlined in Mr Maskey's statement.

But to be clear: this inaccurate publication does not represent the moral teaching of the Church nor does it add credibility to the political process. Because of the importance that the Catholic Church accords to the protection of human life, our position cannot be politically misrepresented.

By virtue of their common humanity, a mother and her unborn baby are both sacred with an *equal* right to life. Last year, in the context of the abortion act which was debated and passed in the Dáil, our pro-life message was vigorously promoted across the island. Therefore how any political party could be mistaken about the pro-life position of the Church defies belief.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

- Because of the busy schedule of Holy Week ceremonies, Bishop McAreavey will not be commenting further on this issue.

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