

### **Insert for parish newsletters for Masses on weekend of 26 and 27 March 2011**

The first anniversary of the publication of the *Pastoral Letter of Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of Ireland* occurs on 19 March 2011. To mark this anniversary Irish bishops wish to bring the following three important initiatives to the attention of the faithful: the publication of their pastoral response *Towards Healing and Renewal*; the new Catholic counselling and support service for survivors of abuse; and, the progress of listening and consultation exercises which have been taking place.

To mark this first anniversary bishops have published the pastoral response *Towards Healing and Renewal*. This outlines different undertakings that the bishops are making in response to survivors of abuse. These steps include: **Prayer for the Survivors of Abuse**; a **commitment to listening** with sensitivity and care to the experiences of those who suffered abuse; **spiritual support** to survivors of abuse who wish to avail themselves of it, including the opportunity for spiritual direction; ongoing commitment to **creating a safer future for children** in the Church in accordance with *Safeguarding Children*; a **review** of Dioceses, Religious Congregations and Societies by the National Board for Safeguarding Children; and ongoing **financial support for the work of safeguarding** and care. *Towards Healing and Renewal* also includes ways in which parish communities can play their part in assisting the process of healing for survivors of abuse.

In February 2011 bishops, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union launched a new Catholic counselling and support service. This counselling service, which continues the important work of *Faoiseamh*, supports survivors of abuse in a professional and caring environment by providing a wide range of services, including Helpline and face-to-face Counselling. Healing Meetings, Group Work, Practical Workshops and a Social Worker/Bridging service designed to link survivors of abuse to other services relevant to their needs, such as the health, local authority, educational and social welfare services.

Over the last year, and prompted by Pope Benedict's *Pastoral Letter*, listening and consultation exercises have been taking place in dioceses. These are continuing and are an important step on the journey of healing and renewal for the Church in Ireland.

Some dioceses have held liturgies of repentance and lament for the harm done to children by priests who abused and by Church authorities who did not respond to those who approached them. Survivors of abuse were consulted about the preparation of these liturgies and also involved in the celebration of them. We are conscious that there may be many who would welcome such an initiative in our diocese but we are reluctant to proceed with such a liturgy without input from survivors. Bishop O'Reilly would like to hear from any survivors who have views on such an initiative, or who might wish to be involved in the planning of a liturgy of repentance and lament. The bishop may be contacted by letter at Bishop's House, Cullies, Cavan, Co Cavan; by email at [bishop@kilmorediocese.ie](mailto:bishop@kilmorediocese.ie) or by phone at 049 4331496.