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New bishop: abuse scandal made church look in mirror

by Cian Molloy by Catholic News Service

DUBLIN -- In the wake of a series of clerical child abuse scandals, the country's newest prelate, Bishop Liam S. MacDaid of Clogher, called on the people of his diocese to join him in "a repentant return to the well of salvation."

Speaking at his consecration at St. Macartan's Cathedral, Monaghan, July 25, Bishop MacDaid said: "Society has forced us in the Irish church to look into the mirror, and what we saw were weakness and failure, victims and abuse. The surgeon's knife has been painful but necessary. A lot of evil and poison has been excised. There comes a time when the surgeon's knife has done what it can, is put away and a regime of rehabilitation for the patient is put in place.

"We have been brought to our knees, but maybe that is no bad thing. It can bring us closer to the core of the mystery," he said.

"So while society keeps the mirror in front of us and rightly checks that we are sincere in our intentions and efforts toward rehabilitation, can I invite you, priests and people of the Diocese of Clogher, to join me in a repentant return to the well of salvation. The journey will include for many ... the enormous challenge of forgiveness. Despite his intense suffering, Jesus forgave those who mocked, spat at, scourged and abused him. One of the co-crucified could not bring himself beyond abuse and excluded himself; the other rose to embracing forgiveness and was welcomed into the kingdom. There are many painful experiences in life where only forgiveness can bring closure."

Last year, public confidence in the Catholic Church in Ireland was undermined after the publication of two government reports, the first detailing decades of neglect and abuse of children in church-run residential institutions, the second faulting the Archdiocese of Dublin for the way it handled 325 sex abuse claims in the years 1975-2004.

Born in Bundoran, County Donegal, July 19, 1945, Bishop MacDaid was ordained a priest in 1969. He has served most of his ministry as a teacher at St. Macartan's College, where he was president for nine years until 1989, when he began a six-year term as chairman of the diocesan priests' council. After spending three years serving in parishes, he was appointed diocesan secretary and chancellor before being named successor to Bishop Joseph Duffy, 76, who retired May 6.

Bishop MacDaid is a fan of Gaelic football and was a player on the County Donegal team in the 1970s.

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