



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2017/4/47
<b>Creation Dates:</b>	10 April 1987
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	5 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

STATEMENT REGARDING THE FUNERAL OF LAURENCE MARLEY

BY BISHOP CAHAL B. DALY

of Down and Connor

10th. April 1987

---

The events surrounding the death and funeral of the late Laurence Marley have caused me great distress. I most strongly condemn his murder. I deeply sympathise with Mrs. Kate Marley and the grieving family and have been remembering them constantly in my prayers.

Although Confirmation ceremonies on last Monday and Tuesday required my absence from Belfast for much of the time each day and delayed my return home until midnight, I was keeping in continuous touch by telephone with the situation through the priests in Sacred Heart Parish and in Holy Cross, Ardoyne. I was also personally in touch with the police authorities on several occasions.

The distress of the Marley family was compounded by the unseemly events which marred the funeral. I was immensely relieved when at last the funeral was allowed to proceed to Holy Cross Church for the funeral Mass, and I thank the priests of Sacred Heart and Holy Cross, and in particular Father Hugh Starkey, Parish Priest of the Sacred Heart for the mediation which they undertook on my behalf in a very tense situation and which at last enabled the funeral to take place in relative dignity and

## CHURCH REGULATIONS

The Church's regulations governing funerals of members of paramilitary organisations have been frequently reiterated and are identical in all the Northern dioceses. They are the following:

1. In arranging funerals, priests of the parish will deal only with next-of-kin, immediate family or undertakers, never with paramilitary organisations.
2. Before agreeing to a funeral, the priests of the parish insist on an undertaking that there will be no flags, emblems, political banners, paramilitary displays or similar manifestations in the Church or its precincts.
3. The Church does not control what happens on the public roads or in the cemeteries.

There is misunderstanding in some Protestant circles about the significance of the funeral rite in the Catholic tradition. The Catholic funeral rite is above all an act of intercession by the Catholic community, especially in the Eucharist, for God's mercy for the deceased. The Catholic Church sees itself as a Church of sinners, and all - be they Popes or prisoners - are deemed to stand in need of the mercy of God. In the funeral rite, we pray for the deceased that "God may give him/her a merciful judgement and forgive all his/her sins". The Catholic funeral liturgy is no sense commendation of the acts of a deceased person, but rather a recognition that "we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God".

The funeral rite, from the prayers said in the home of the deceased through the funeral procession to the church and subsequently to the cemetery, is a religious action, and should be conducted in a spirit of faith, recollectness and prayer. A funeral is not an occasion for a paramilitary propaganda coup. Neither is it the occasion for the display of police and military strength. Both paramilitary demonstration and police saturation are an intrusion into family grief and are offensive to the Catholic Church's ministry to the dead and to the grieving.

In the case of the funeral of Laurence Marley, the honour and dignity extended by the Church to the body of a dead Christian were affronted by the bombs and bomb hoaxes which were deliberately planned by the paramilitaries to coincide with the funeral on Monday and by the general organised mayhem of the succeeding days. All this also made negotiations with the police more difficult.

At the same time, the massive and disproportionate police and military build-up around the whole area served simply to inflame emotions, and ultimately played into the hands of the paramilitary organisation. Very many moderate people in the Catholic community have been dismayed at the spectacle of the RUC being seen to walk into a trap cleverly but predictably set for them by the paramilitaries.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF POLICING A DIVIDED SOCIETY

However, anyone who tries to look at our situation reasonably and objectively - as the Christian is morally obliged to do - must recognise the extremely difficult problems with which a police force is placed in policing a community so deeply and often bitterly divided as ours. It is essential that the RUC apply and be seen to apply exactly the same criteria to the policing of loyalist events as they do to the policing of nationalist

events; and the impartiality of their behaviour will be very closely scrutinized over coming months. It is not less essential that the nationalist community do not apply double standards of judgement to police behaviour, varying according to which community is being policed. Nationalists must not expect on nationalist occasions police concessions and leniencies which they would rightly resent and condemn in the case of loyalist occasions. Equally the RUC must at all times show itself to be strictly impartial in its treatment of the two communities.

#### POLICING OF PARAMILITARY FUNERALS

The events of the past week have been a severe setback to the hopes of a gradual return to more peaceful conditions. There are many lessons which must be learned.

The RUC must rethink their policy in respect of the funerals of paramilitaries. The massive concentration of personnel and of vehicles deployed over a whole series of recent funerals of Republican paramilitaries have now been amply demonstrated to be provocative and counter-productive. Admission and correction of errors of judgement is a sign of confidence and sincerity, not a sign of weakness. The mistakes of recent days must not be allowed to happen again.

The RUC should formulate and should publicly announce in advance the norms and conditions which they expect mourners to observe and which they themselves intend to observe in such situations. The norms should be such that reasonable people would see them as right and necessary.

Catholics, for their part, must develop greater sensitivity in respect of the inordinately difficult task facing the RUC in our society. Past experience has left deep suspicions, resentments and hurts. But the Christian is called to daily conversion of one's thoughts, emotions and attitudes into the pattern of Christ. Only Christ can heal our memories and make whole our hurts. There is no other way to peace in our country other than Christ's way of repentance and conversion.

Catholics must strive to grow in understanding of the liturgy and spirituality of death and resurrection, and thus come to see that it is on grounds of our faith that we must reject any intrusion of alien elements into the conduct of funerals.

#### THE PASSION PLAY

We must ask, is it just an accident that the scenes of wild destruction in West and North Belfast in recent days have occurred at the same time as the Passion Play was being enacted in St. Peter's Cathedral, surely one of the greatest events on the Falls Road for many a decade. Is this not rather an indication that forces of evil are at work in the community? Is it not evidence of the degree to which some have strayed far from the faith of our fathers and have lost all respect and sensitivity even for the most sacred feelings of the Catholic community? This evil will be cast out only by prayer and fasting. Our prayer goes out to those who have strayed, that they may return to the love of God, their Father.

I ask all Catholics to make this Holy Week a time of special fervour. May there be great recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. May our churches be crowded for the liturgies and for personal prayer on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and for the Easter Vigil. It is in Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection that lie all our hopes for peace in our country. Our Risen Lord is our guarantee that the powers of destruction and of