



Irish National 17 October Committee

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Drawing of 17 October Human Rights and Poverty Stone,
Custom House Quay, Dublin by Joe Connolly

**The Most Reverend
Archbishop Diarmuid Martin
Primate of Ireland and Archbishop of Dublin**

12th February 2018

A vision to discuss:

People who know hardship and social exclusion,
meeting with **Pope Francis** at the Famine Statues
and the Human Rights and Poverty Stone in Dublin

Dear Archbishop Diarmuid Martin,

We hope this letter finds you well. It follows the letter you received from our Secretary Pierre Klein, at Christmas 2017.

On the Monday before Christmas, when interviewed by Sean O'Rourke on RTE Radio, you confirmed the wish of Pope Francis to meet here in Ireland with people and families facing hardship because of poverty, homelessness, migration and social exclusion. More recently on 1st February you shared with many of our friends in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, the idea that the Pope could visit the Dublin 1 area. Last week the media also suggested that Pope Francis could visit prisoners in the Mountjoy Prisons.

In this context, we, the members of the Irish UN End Poverty Day Committee and some friends of the Day's events decided to write to you again.

With this letter we would like to ask you and the officials in charge of finalising the Pope's programme to consider as one of the possible options for the meeting expected by Pope Francis the following "vision":

The meeting expected by Pope Francis could involve various groups and families hit by poverty and exclusion and could take place at the very significant place: the Famine Statues and the Human Rights and End Poverty Stone on Custom House Quay.

We, the signatories of this letter, feel that this vision has four strong features:

- It connects the Irish Past with its Future and gives the opportunity to the Pope to stop at the Famine Statues and meet community members from the North East Inner City.
- People facing hardship because of poverty, homelessness, migration,

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criminal conviction, ethnicity and social exclusion have already a 17 years long tradition of coming to this location and speaking in dignity with the leaders of various institutions.

- It's a place of unity for small community groups and larger organisations. If the preparation of the meeting is managed in the spirit of the UN Day event, it could help avoid the difficulty of the choice of just one or two organisations involved in the meeting with the Pope.

- In the past, Pope John Paul II stopped at the Human Rights and Poverty Stone of Paris in 1997. There, he read publicly the Call to Action launched by the French Catholic Priest Father Joseph Wresinski which is engraved in the Stone. The Pope was welcomed by Geneviève de Gaulle and young adults facing exclusion. Here in Ireland, we could dream of having Church Leaders, President Michael D Higgins who knows the Dublin Stone and the gatherings taking place there, together with families and people from deprived communities.

If you and the team in charge of the finalisation of the programme of the visit of Pope Francis would decide to explore this option, we would be of course ready to meet with you and explain more the features of the place and the possible ways to organise a meaningful gathering there.

This letter is signed by 33 signatories who in the past 18 years attended and supported the UN End Poverty Day event, first at the Famine Statues in Dublin and later at the Human Rights and Poverty Stone (unveiled 10 years ago on 17 October 2008). They all know the spirit of the meetings which took place there.

Thanking you in advance for your interest in our vision,
Yours faithfully,

Belinda Nugent – Irish member of the International Committee for the United Nations Day for the Eradication of Poverty, SAOL Project - **Sister Bernadette MacMahon DC** – Director, Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice - **Bríd O'Brien** -Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed - **Sister Caoimhín Ní Uallacháin OP** - Dominican Sister- **Emer and Joe Costello** – former MEP and former Minister - **Jillian Van Turnhout** - former Senator and former CEO of the Children Rights Alliance - **Maire O'Higgins** - Larkin Community College, Dublin 1 - **Martina Phelan OP** - Mission Area Prioress, Dominican Sisters - **Maureen O'Sullivan TD** - **Sancha Mangat** - Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, Dublin 1 - **Sister Stanislaus Kennedy RSC** - Founder of Focus Ireland - **Adrian Cristea** - Dublin City Interfaith Forum – **Andrew Montague** – Dublin City Councillor (Ballymun) – **Father Brendan McManus SJ** - **Don O'Leary** – Director, Cork Life Centre - **Donald Lee** – President, International Committee for October 17, New York - **Fergus McCabe** – North Inner City Community Coalition – **Father Finbarr Tracey SVD** – Director, Kairos Communication - **Fintan Farrell** - former Director of EAPN Europe – **Father Frank Brady SJ** – **Hugh Frazer** – Expert in EU Social Policy, first Director of the Combat Poverty Agency - **Mark Hogan** - All Together in Dignity Ireland, Dublin 1 - **Brother Martin Byrne CBS** – Life Centre Ballyfermot - **Maurice Hurley** – INTO Global Citizenship Schools - **Michael Kilbride** – School Liaison Teacher, O'Connell School Dublin 1 – **Brother Patrick Madigan CBS** - Edmund Rice House, Dublin 1 - **Paul Ginnell** – Director, EAPN Ireland - **Father Peter McVerry SJ** – **Phil Brennan** – Founder and Director of the Island of Ireland Peace Choir - **Proinsias de Rossa** - Chair of TASC, former Minister of Social Protection - **Sean Dunne** – North West Inner City Training and Development Programme – **Father Sean Healy SMA**- Director of Social Justice Ireland.

The National Irish 17 October Committee is made up of activists and groups in local communities, teachers, home school liaison officers and members of organisations such as: All Together in Dignity – ATD Fourth World Ireland, Coláiste Eoin, Daughters of Charity Community Services, Dochas, European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland, Focus Ireland, Inner City Organisations Network ICON, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Irish Refugee Council, Larkin Community College, Life Centre, Ballyfermot, Matt Talbot Community Trust, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, Neighbourhood Youth Project 2 – NYP2, North West Inner City Training and Development Project, O'Connell School, Pavée Point, Saint Laurence O'Toole's Junior Boys School, Saol Project, Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice.

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