

J.M.J.A.



Tel. (0232) 241044

Clonard Monastery,
Clonard Gardens,
Belfast,

B.T.13 2RL

18. 11. 90

Mr. John Hume MP, MEP.,
6, Westend Park,
Derry.

Dear John,

We, the undersigned priests, representing the Redemptorist apostolate for justice and peace based at Clonard Monastery, Belfast, have decided to write to you because we believe that an opportunity to persuade the Republican Movement (the I.R.A. and the Sinn Fein Party) to end their armed campaign in favour of a purely political strategy now exists and should be developed without delay.

We are aware of this opportunity because our pastoral work for peace involves us in a continuing dialogue with representative people from all sides of the conflict including those who can speak for the Republican Movement. We are guided in this by the conviction that, as Christians, we are called to engage in an unconditional dialogue with every interested party, however we may disapprove of their policies or methods.

Our own interest, however, is not party political but moral and humanitarian because, in approaching you, we are motivated by the daily experience of Clonard Monastery in dealing with the tragic consequences of the conflict (bloodshed, imprisonment, shattered lives and families) and also by our commitment to do all in our power to end these consequences for everyone, without exception, who is exposed to them.

Our dialogue to date has shown that, given the necessary communication with the other political parties or authorities concerned, the Republican Movement could be persuaded to end its strategy of armed force in favour of a strategy of purely political action or even of new, realistic ways of defining and applying the democratic principles that should govern the just resolution of the conflict.

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We have been unable, however, to develop the opportunity thus presented because of an impasse at the heart of it. This impasse has been created, on the one hand, by the insistence of the Republican Movement that it cannot and will not lay down arms in favour of any new proposals for justice and peace unless and until it has been able to verify the political viability of such proposals through unconditional communication with the other political parties or authorities who would be involved in implementing them. On the other hand, the impasse has been caused by the insistence of these parties and authorities that they cannot and will not engage in any kind of political communication with the Republican Movement unless and until it lays down its arms.

We believe that this impasse is holding up the opportunity for a real breakthrough on the road to peace and that a serious and sustained effort must, therefore, be made to resolve it.

We are convinced, from our knowledge of the possibilities and of the co-operation that has been promised to us to date, that it could be satisfactorily and even quickly resolved by means of a special pastoral intervention which, in keeping with the mission of the Church in any situation of violent conflict, would provide a sanctuary where the lines of communication necessary to bridge the impasse could be set up and maintained without loss of face or compromise of principle by any of the parties concerned.

We would be prepared to facilitate the creation of the kind of "communication sanctuary" we have in mind.

You may show this letter to anyone whom you think would be relevant to its purpose.

With kind regards and praying God's blessing on your own work for peace,

Yours sincerely,

Raphael Gallagher C.Ss.R.,
Provincial Superior.

John O'Donnell C.Ss.R.
John O'Donnell C.Ss.R.,
Rector, Clonard Monastery.

Alec Reid C.Ss.R.
Alec Reid C.Ss.R.



John J. V.
Tel. (0292) 241044

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