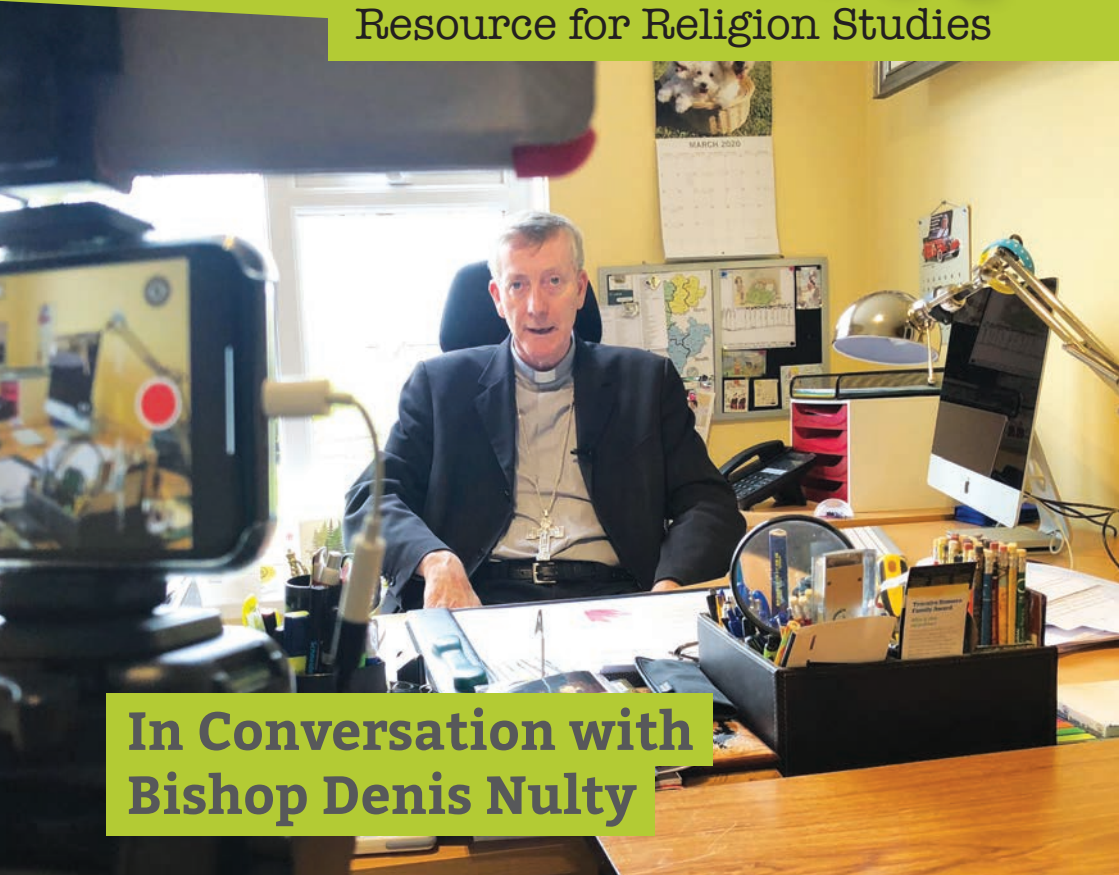


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RE:LINK

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In Conversation with Bishop Denis Nulty

RE:LINK returns after the Summer with an interview with Bishop Denis Nulty. Bishop Nulty is in charge of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin, which includes many of the midland counties and

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F: Can you tell our readers a little bit about your background?

D: I grew up in County Meath, born in 1963, in Slane parish, on a farm, the youngest of a family of five. I went to school in St Patrick's National School in Slane, before going to St Patrick's Classical College in Navan.

F: What was your favourite subject when you were in school?

D: I loved Geography, I also liked English and Civics.

F: When did you first feel the calling towards joining the priesthood?



St. Patrick's College, Maynooth

D: Perhaps the calling was always with me but more pronounced at different stages in my life ... I had an uncle who was a Columban priest, who worked for a time in Japan, and I had a granduncle who was a priest in Drummoyle Parish in the Archdiocese of Sydney, Australia. I had an aunt who was a nun ... but also we had a good relationship with the priests in our parish, and I think that knowing the priest is an important part of formation.

F: Before you became bishop, what steps were involved in your education?

D: I went from St Pat's College in Navan, to the seminary in St Patrick's College in Maynooth where I studied from 1981 to 1988. I was ordained a priest in 1988. I served as curate in Mullingar from 1988 to 1998. I was parish priest in St Mary's, Drogheda from 1998 to 2013, before being appointed by Pope Francis as bishop of Kildare and Leighlin in 2013.

F: What is a typical day in your role as a bishop?

D: There is no such thing as a typical day in my life as a bishop, or in anyone's life. Every day is a new day and a new beginning, and I think if you are to go to bed with that, tomorrow we start afresh, and we try our best to live the call to serving. The motto I picked as bishop is 'Serve the Lord with Gladness', and I endeavour to do that every day I get out of bed.

F: What are the most rewarding elements of your role as bishop?

D: Being present with people, being present with my priests, being present with my brother bishops. Being present with people is so important to me, and I suppose that's why I found last few months such a nightmare for me because you're basically semi-isolated in many ways, so it teaches us the importance of being present and being with people.

F: You are regarded as a very actively involved bishop in your diocese, why is that important to you?

D: I don't think that it is just important to me, I think that it is important to everybody. People need

to see a bishop, they need to be visible in their community, they need to be present with people. Back to that word presence. They also need to speak into the cultural questions that are important today and be a voice, sometimes 'a sign of contradiction', that lovely phrase of Pope St John Paul II.

F: What is your favourite piece of Scripture?

D: My favourite piece of scripture is the wonderful story of 'The Road to Emmaus', Luke chapter 24, verses 13 to 35. It tells of the two on the road to Emmaus and how we are all on a journey of life and we all find that the Lord in some ways comes to us ... 'That's exactly what happened to Cleopas and his pal in Luke's account, they met Jesus through Eucharist. That's why the celebration of Sunday Mass, and weekday Mass is so important because we meet the Lord in those moments.

F: Do you have a favourite hymn?

D: I like 'Holy Ground', it's a hymn by Fr Liam Lawton, one of the priests in my diocese, because he composed it especially for my ordination as a bishop here in 2013 ... I also like 'Be Still for the Presence of the Lord', I love that one.

F: Who inspires you and why?

D: I am very inspired by Pope Francis ... he is a powerful symbol and sign for us, at this time. I also think at a more local level, Brother Kevin of the Capuchin Day Centre and the team up there do super work. I have great respect for the many lay people who I see coming to the fore, taking on huge roles in their own parishes, working alongside priests for the

development of the kingdom.

F: What part does prayer play in your life?

D: A huge part. I start my morning with prayer, and I pray for a good while then and I also pray at night-time before I go to bed. I also tend to punctuate my day, such as before meetings I will spend a bit of time at prayer. Prayer is the oil that keeps my life going.

F: We have learned in a previous article that Pope Francis follows football and enjoys dancing. What is your favourite hobby?



River Barrow, Carlow

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D: I love Gaelic football. I also love walking. I particularly enjoy walking along the river Barrow which is splendid here in Carlow.

F: What advice would you have for young adults studying religious education?

D: I'd encourage them from the bottom of my heart; we need articulate lay people who understand their faith, and the only way we can do that is for more and more young adults to study religious education.

F: What guidance do you have for a young person who wants to get more involved in their local church?

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D: Roll up your sleeves, get involved, it's an open door! The door of the church opens out, it also opens in, please come and help.

F: As you know the environment is on people's radar at the moment, with *Laudato Si'* in mind, what role do you feel young people have in protecting the planet?

D: I was at a conference organised by Trócaire in the Dolmen Hotel here in Carlow ... and I was so impressed and inspired by the young people present and the projects they're undertaking to spread that key message of the environment and 'Care for our Common Home'. I think of a school called Queen of the Universe school in Bagenalstown and the work that they are doing with an outdoor classroom ... I also have a great concern about plastic in our oceans, a huge issue, we need to address that.

F: Confirmation candidates in Kildare and Leighlin diocese each write you letters leading up to their confirmation day, what have you


learned about the young people in these parishes?


D: I read every single letter to understand more deeply what young people are saying and what kind of life they're leading, and how I can engage with them better in the ceremony of Confirmation. That's why the letters are there. I use the letters in a sensible, clear way, and it works very well at every ceremony.


F: Is there anything else that you would like to share with our readers?

D: I enjoy reading *The Messenger* magazine myself and its great to see a religious journal out there. Also I want to encourage people to reflect on vocation. If they know a young man and they think that 'he'd make a good priest' encourage him, and parents encourage sons and grandsons, don't be afraid; and daughters and granddaughters to religious life. But equally to the wider spectrum of young people, you are the present of our Church, get involved!


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