



Roundtower
Association

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10th January 2021

Feast of the Holy Family

The Diocesan Office,
Galway Cathedral,
Gaol Road,
Galway.

Dear Bishop Kelly,

With Saint Peter and the Apostles, we, members of the Catholic faithful in the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora, declare that “God has more right to be obeyed than men” (Acts 5:29). Once again, since the feast of St. Stephen, you have supported the suspension of public celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We must be very clear: the teaching of the Catholic Church is that the realm of a government’s authority does not extend to spiritual matters or matters of divine law. God, as God, has a right to be adored; the first duty of His people is to adore Him. The notion that the duties of the Catholic Church should be dictated by civil authorities was definitively repudiated by Pope Leo XIII in 1885: “Whenever this is the case [that the Church is subject to civil power], order is disturbed, for things natural are put above things supernatural” (*Immortale Dei*, 33). Of course order is disturbed when we do not give God what is His due! In the same encyclical, Leo XIII states that “we are bound absolutely to worship God in that way which He has shown to be His will” (*ibid.* 6). In his 1922 encyclical, *Ubi Arcano*, Pope Pius XI restated much of what had been taught by his predecessor, Leo XIII, saying that, while the Church does not wish to be mixed up in purely civil affairs, “she cannot permit or tolerate that the State use the pretext of certain laws of unjust regulations to do injury to the rights of an order superior to that of the state, to interfere with the constitution given the

Church by Christ, or to violate the rights of God Himself over civil society” (*Ubi Arcano*, 65). Is this not precisely what you are permitting to occur?

We do not believe that any of the faithful would argue that reasonable precautions should not be taken to protect the wellbeing of all. In recent months, churches have made every effort to ensure that the faithful can attend Holy Mass safely. However, we need you, as our spiritual father and pastor to speak out and defend the right of God to be worshipped publicly by His people. It is obvious by both faith and reason that the rights of God are superior to all other rights, and, this being so, His sovereignty must be acknowledged through public worship. We call on you to assert – even in the face of government opposition – that the Holy Mass is essential. It is essential for not only our spiritual welfare but also for the temporal needs and good of the entire world. Should we continue to abandon or “soften” basic Catholic principles, such as the rights of God, we may be sure that the powers of secularism are doing no such thing with their principles, which seek only to obliterate God and the sacred and to promote disorder and discord. As the roar of secularism gets ever louder, shall we be content to allow the voice of true religion be reduced to a pitiful whimper? God’s rights must be defended, and the first duty of His people – to offer Him fitting worship in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass – must never be hindered.

All of us, the undersigned, pledge to pray for you that you will have the courage to restore public worship immediately: this authority belongs to you alone, because there is no authority above the Catholic Church when it comes to matters of public worship. We will support you in any way that we can. *For as long as the current restrictions persist, we shall pray for you every Sunday outside the Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed into Heaven and St. Nicholas, highlighting our hunger for public worship, our yearning for the Holy Eucharist, and our need of sanctifying grace which comes from the Holy Sacrifice. So, we say to you: “Bishop Kelly, let us attend Holy Mass!”*

Yours faithfully in Christ and Mary.