

PEACE ROAD 2024 Dublin, Kilmainham:

“The Republic at 75: assessing our Founding Ideals”

In convening this year’s Peace Road Walk and Forum as part of our now annual commemoration of yesterday’s UN Day of Peace, I am conscious that this year marks 75 years since the declaration of the Republic of Ireland, *Phoblacht na h-Éireann*, with the coming into force of the *Republic of Ireland Act (1948)* in April of 1949. With this legislation Ireland had cut its last remaining official political ties with Great Britain.

This morning at Kilmainham, we witnessed the beautiful tribute to our veterans, that is the National War Memorial Gardens, to our soldiers who fought as part of the United Kingdom in World War I. Despite being a free nation Ireland also provided one of the largest non-conscript forces to the allies in the Second World War, albeit alienating herself from those allies with her stubborn insistence on official neutrality.

For me Kilmainham is a powerful representation of the paradox of the birth of the modern Irish nation, coming as it did during World War I when “*England’s difficulty, was Ireland’s opportunity*” ... the complexities of our situation as a small nation laid bare as we walked from the gardens to the jail: from a site marking international anguish and despair, the “Great” War to “End all Wars”, to a site synonymous with the birth of a new independent nation, unsure of her future, scarred by her past, too young to appreciate what had just occurred and what lay ahead.

Last year’s Peace Road in Belfast reflected on a quarter of a century of peace and the success of the Good Friday Agreement (“GFA”) acknowledging the success of modern Ireland and how the island continues to experience economic prosperity and near full employment. These achievements were “holy grails” when I was growing up in the 1980s at least, along with an end to what seemed to be the interminable “Troubles” with our neighbouring island and the history and legacy of conflict and civil war in Northern Ireland. While 2024’s Ireland is a confident one, where Republicans might look forward to another “holy grail”: Reunification, in the near to distant future; at least that is what the public is told by the narratives that are fed to us by elements of the media and nationalism, or what might be termed as “Cultural Catholics”, a phrase coined by Dr. Brendan O’Leary and echoed again at his *Ireland’s Future* presentation a few months ago in Belfast.

While re-unification is a perfectly legitimate aspiration, shared by the majority of Republicans and Nationalists, it is of course a key “dividend” of the GFA, one that has been an important ingredient to ensure the cessation of violence and an end to paramilitarism. However, there is another aspiration on this island, one that sees Northern Ireland “remain” in the United Kingdom. The political future in terms of sovereignty will continue to be defined by this issue and the related one of when might be the right time to trigger a “border poll”, such that it will favour a particular outcome.

While “demography” might not exactly be “destiny” and the crudely termed “sectarian headcount” will be a factor, it will not be the only one. Other issues will become more important, such as the slow creep of secularism, which continues not just in the Republic, but also increasingly in a North, once staunchly religious, not just within Protestantism, but also amongst Catholics, with a piety forged out of

decades of adversity and a siege mentality, long perpetuated by justifiable feelings of belonging to a second-class citizenry.

Most Southern nationalist “GFA agnostics” might prefer to keep things the way they are for now, to leave well enough alone as it were, lest we risk our hard-won stability, peace, economic growth and seemingly continuous development. No mean feat, especially “Post Brexit” and following eight tumultuous years of an English civil war of sorts. Ireland has had to wait to see the direction we must go following these years and now that the matter seems resolved for now at least, can again dare to look more deeply into the state of the nation, her possible future and what type of values and philosophy will infuse, inform and permeate our fair isle?

What better time to do so than at today’s UN Day of Peace celebration at our UPF Ireland annual Peace Road Walk and Forum and to reflect on our founders’ intentions? To presume to look into the minds and hearts of those, vilified by many at the time as rabblers and troublemakers, who with a vision of an Ireland, united, free and prosperous, who struck out for our liberty in the Easter 1916 Rising at the G.P.O., “martyrs” subsequently executed in Kilmainham Gaol, where we had the privilege of visiting this morning.

We should also look to 1922 when our own civil war between those who were “for” and “against” the Treaty to accept independence in return for a partitioned island, senselessly slaughtered each other. Today, our identity as “Gaels” and Irish men and women is being challenged by globalist forces that shape our daily, hourly and even our instant, near “real time”, discourse.

Through social media we debate values, culture, society, mass immigration, the family and what it even means to be a man or a woman or even human. In the past few years, especially since the invasion by Russia of Ukraine, the “debate” has moved rather ominously from the cybersphere to the streets, towns and public squares, with politicians and their families being threatened in their homes and hotels and other buildings set aside to give sanctuary for international protection applicants being burned down as well as rioting being fuelled by unknown and nefarious forces with unclear providence.

Doesn’t it behove this Forum to reflect on not only the founders’ visions, but also to ask Almighty God, invoked in our 1937 Constitution, *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, if we have been true to those values and aspirations? Or, if these are even “fit for purpose” going forward into the second century of the state?

Should majority Republicans presume to be the ones that define any new “post-border poll” Ireland? Should they take it for granted that whatever arrangement is voted for sets out exactly what this new arrangement will entail? For all our sakes it probably would be preferable that there be a set formula or choice of solutions put before the electorate, whether that be a federal, confederal, unitary or other prescription. The confusion as to the consequences following the Brexit Leave vote is surely a cautionary lesson on the virtues of preparing as much as possible, a plan, to deal with the outcome of a future poll.

Will these majority Republicans declare, proclaim or seek democratic legitimacy for a new, “2nd Republic”, with a new Constitution, an “*Éire Aontaithe*” with clear rights and responsibilities complete with a preamble which reflects our shared universal values as well as our disparate cultures and identities, North and South? Or will they just seek to absorb the six counties into the existing Republic, perhaps a 32-

county socialist Republic? Maybe even recasting it as one nation under a variant of the ideology of one of the Seven key founding fathers and signatories of the 1916 Proclamation of the Republic *James Connolly* or fellow socialist and founder MacDiarmada, or under whatever strand of socialism, Marxism, neo-Marxism, progressivism you're having yourself? How long will the faith of the one million or so "Cultural Protestants" endure and stay strong enough to uphold their traditional values and vote down any attempts to take God out of such a configuration?

Will Unionists opposed to a Green and Red United Ireland have the numbers to resist a future French style secular, progressive Republic? Or will their faith endure, maybe even benefitting from an alliance of neo-Catholic values from Nationalism, perhaps with a laity eager to return to the more conservative vision of founders such as Pearse, once the Catholic Church has repented and purged itself of its criminal history of clerical abuse and coverups? Would such a revival be enough to encourage the die hards to throw in their lot with a group whose ideals form part of their own founding myth, one built on revulsion for "Rome Rule" and Anglo-phobic "Fenianism"? Has three decades of peace changed the outlook enough on the island to one where political re-unification mutual cultural and sectarian reconciliation can become more than a dream, but a substantial reality?

Much of the Republic's history and legacy has been tarnished by these crimes that have done so much damage not just to the victims of clerical paedophilia, sexual and physical abuse, but to what was once the bedrock of the Republican vision: the faith infused values of the Gospel, shared by Protestants, Catholics and Presbyterians alike. A once very live and vibrant faith which empowered the Church to take responsibility for Education, Healthcare and so many other social services that the State was unable to provide either before or after independence, has been brought low by the actions of the so-called "religious."

What values and Constitution would inform such an endeavour as a future "just" Republic? American Republican values that don't favour any sect but that still holds in its constitution that all men are created equal, with inalienable rights: a nation which imprints the slogan "in God We Trust" on its currency? Will a new Republic invoke God as previously done in 1937 and if so in what context? A Catholic one, a Christian one? Or will it be a secular one that puts absolute faith in science and the rights of man: one guaranteeing, liberty, fraternity and equality, such as France; or one like that of the United States, where we are all equal under the eyes of God with inalienable rights, where no religion will ever be allowed to become one of establishment and where government is always kept in check by the people?

All to be decided: surely we must learn from the past but not dispense with best practise and wisdom? Purging clerics and monarchists was wrong in revolutionary France of the late 18th and early 19th century, equally, giving special positions to the Churches in both Ireland and Northern Ireland was also disastrous, both for the church and the states that gave or surrendered power to them. Membership of the EU and the Euro has laid the foundation for economic success and prosperity here, increasing our markets, competition, labour force, improving our infrastructure and living standards, helping attract foreign direct investment from multinational corporations who see Ireland as good place to do business with an educated English-speaking workforce and a tax and legal system ideal for doing business in a market of over 500 million citizens.

Recent ill-fated attempts to create a Constitution for the EU in 2004 are instructive, where it notably refused to acknowledge the existence of a higher power in any preamble, bowing to pressure from secular forces, who sought to define it in solely humanist terms. Will such a Re-unified Ireland and any new Constitution get the balance right: both ensuring protection from establishment religions, prone to abuse of power by virtue of this position, blighting our land historically; as well as also ensuring true freedom of faith for all? A freedom which is not just theoretical “lip-service”, but one that allows people of all faiths and none to contribute to the development of the nation and to promote values informed by those faiths, where such policies can be discussed democratically and if endorsed by the citizens, ensure a better quality of life for all?

Freedom of faith has to be a core value in any new Republic or Constitutional arrangement. The Communist inspired persecution of the Family Federation in Japan, also founded by our UPF founders Father and Mother Moon, following the assassination of former PM Abe, a supporter of UPF and a strong anti-communist, is deplorable and casts a shadow of shame over a country which has for so worked so hard since the Second World War to lead the example as a bastion of democratic freedom and human rights. The contagion of religious persecution is now spreading to other new religious movements such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses. How long before more popular and “accepted” religions are targeted by this relentless and unjust campaign that will only rest when it has destroyed the bedrock of the nation and all nations, the family, which for many people of faith is the key to experiencing God’s love and grace?

While many might blame religions for the world’s problems, materialistic Marxism inspired communism is responsible for far more carnage, especially in the 20th century: in the People’s Republic of China, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, the Eastern European “Bloc” and globally, as well as influencing other materialistic and fascists, dictators such as Adolf Hitler. As Secretary General of UPF Ireland I call on the Minister for Justice and the newly elected EU Justice Commissioner Michael McGrath to join in the efforts of the 25 European nations that are part of the 37-state coalition that make International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (“IRFBA”) set up in 2020 to spread religious freedom worldwide and condemn the actions of the Kashina administration in Japan in trying to seize the assets of minority religions.

I call on Ireland, if she is serious about her commitment to Republicanism and human rights, to join this body and work with these nations to lobby for an end to religious persecution in Japan as well as in China against the Uighurs, Christians in the Middle East and anywhere in the world where people are persecuted because of their beliefs and on the EU and I call on EU Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen to immediately restore and resource the Office of Freedom of Religion or Belief and make its brief and mission a priority during the next 5 years term of the Commission and Parliament.

Additionally I salute UN Special Rapporteur for Religious Freedom, Dr Nazila Ghanea, for the work that she and the UN Commission for Human Rights is doing in monitoring religious freedom worldwide and ask that she go to Japan as part of her 2nd (and last) official visitation of 2024 to interrogate the Japanese government about their violations of religious freedom and to interview victims from Family Federation and other affected religious minorities.

Next year will be the 20th anniversary of the founding UPF Ireland in November of 2005. Our co-founder the late Rev Sun Myung Moon, then 85 years old, a lifelong and passionate advocate of Korean

re-unification and the initiator of the “Peace Road” world highway proposal, linking Russia with the USA, stretching from Santiago to the Cape of Good Hope, spoke for four and a half hours at the Gresham Hotel nearby. His central point was that in order for this nation, or any nation, to thrive, it has to be built on the foundation of strong families and the promotion of marriage and freedom of faith.

UPF in recent years has been developing an extensive range of education programmes, outlining how a lasting world of peace can be realised through promoting essential and universal values, mutual prosperity and interdependence. UPF co-founder Hak Ja Han Moon, now in her ‘80’s is relentless in her determination to bring this message of “peace through building loving families” to every corner of the world. While Father Moon saw, and Mother Moon sees herself as people of deep faith, the world, and the Ireland they seek to build is an inclusive one for people of all faiths and none. A nation where the bedrock is one where every child can be “*cherished equally*” as it says in the 1916 proclamation of the Republic.

Every citizen should aspire to have the true love of a father and a mother, wherever and whenever possible. A home where they can grow up in and fulfil their full potential as individuals and experience joy and hope and true love in fulfilling relationships as children and eventually aspiring to provide this themselves as parents. The skills that are needed to interact with others are all found in the family that strives as the model to achieve the “Four Great Realms” of heart: where one can experience parental love, children’s love, sibling’s love (if one is lucky enough to have siblings), the joy of marriage and true conjugal love. The family should be the “school of love” where citizens of the Republic should learn and experience true love.

This is the founding spirit behind UPF and why today we carry on the tradition of the World Peace Blessing to acknowledge and support the crucially important, life giving and affirming institution of marriage, which when all obstacles and challenges of this much maligned ancient “institution” have been overcome, has the ability to provide the family with the foundation of true love between a father and a mother and build stable societies, from which grow stable, self-confident and prosperous nations that do not have the need or desire for conflict or war, such as we tragically see today being waged on Ukraine and Gaza. If we all really live the values that our faiths profess surely we would not witness such loss of life and misery in these and other conflicts throughout the world? UPF is convinced that its Principles of Peace if embodied and practised globally can result in peace between faiths and nations, as we acknowledge that we are all brothers and sisters and unique expressions of God, the Heavenly Parent.

Unfortunately, of course, many children in Ireland today do not have a home, never mind a mother and a father. The stresses on family life are many, both economic and social. Many people never marry, not finding a compatible mate or preferring to remain single. Many single parent families or those suffering huge economic disadvantage do a heroic job in raising their kids, often under huge pressure and adversity. UPF Ireland commends all those striving to be good parents, especially those who do not have a life partner to help them raise a family. We will continue to build programs and provide character education and development to equip individuals with life and relationship skills that can help all of us to be part of the “village” that can raise every child as the old African proverb says ... so that we can fulfil the nation’s founders’ and UPF’s founders’ intentions.

While the state has a role in assisting families and preventing and punishing crime and abuse as well as upholding the law and protecting the vulnerable, it must respect the role of parents and not seek to impose “solutions” based on a particular worldview which might be alien or antithetical to families being raised with a particular set of religious beliefs or none.

Our UPF co-founder Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon first spoke in Ireland over 30 years ago in 1993 at the Westbury Hotel in Dublin. A year later our nation was blessed with the miracle of the Peace Process ripening and the first IRA ceasefire. Since then, we have seen our nation develop at a rate never seen before, both socially and economically. It is imperative that we continue to build peace and prosperity for the more than 7 million people now on the island as we look to the next 75 years of the Republic, and that we deal with the new threats to society, lest it breaks down irreparably and we foolishly squander our precious peace, prosperity and good, “providential” even, fortune, gifted from heaven.

Will we stand by and watch as the forces that seek to destroy our peace and future unity threaten our culture and identity and reputation as a welcoming land, once the “*land of saints and scholars*”? Instead of offering a hand and helping those who are in need, will we continue to allow a vocal and growing militant minority pull us into a descent, to a selfish “*mé-féin*” Republic, which can only lead to our destruction as a nation? I believe in Ireland, and I believe our founders are looking down on us today and that the inspiration they provided us in giving their lives for the Republic will continue to provide the spiritual power needed to propel us to even greater successes in the future.

UPF has a wide network of peace ambassadors which continues to grow and provides leadership and solidarity here in Ireland and globally. Therefore, I am confident that we will add to our ranks more and more of the responsible clergy, citizens, artists, politicians, legislators, media professionals, activists and a wide and diverse range of stakeholders who wish to live for the sake of others and who call Ireland home.

To build a True Republic of whatever exact political configuration or geographical boundaries it is imperative that we welcome those who can help heal the nation and want to work together to deal with the challenges of providing housing, welfare, health and education, transport and public services. To deal with the challenges of protecting our citizens from criminality, promoting and designing responsible immigration and social policies, ensuring the rights and responsibilities of all, especially minorities, be they those with a faith or of no faith at all but who live by their conscience. Thank you all for participating in today’s Peace Road Walk and Forum and I hope and pray that we can continue to build on and go beyond the standard of the values of our nation’s founders as well as those of UPF. *Go raibh míle maith agaibh agus guím rath Dé orainn go léir.* (Thank you all and I pray God’s blessings on us all).