

Doctor **Francis Moylan**

to his

Beloved Flock

and in particular

*To the lower order of the Roman Catholic Inhabitants of the
Diocese of Cork.*

In times like the present, when the government has declared its determination to suppress by the most vigorous and summary means, the spirit of insurrection and outrage, which has manifested itself in some parts of the country, I should consider myself deficient in what I owe to you, Dearly Beloved Brethren, if I omitted to warn you of the impending danger, and of the necessity of adopting such a line of conduct, as may prevent the exercise of the severities of the law against you. Charged as I am, by Almighty God, with the care of your souls...it is my bounden duty to remove as far as in my power, any delusion under which you may at any time labor, and to apprise you of whatever might tend either to obstruct, or to promote your temporal and eternal welfare. In the present critical state of our country, and under the threats of personal violence, with which I have been menaced, the timid precautions arising from personal consideration, might suggest and recommend a silent observation of passing occurrences...but I beseech you, Beloved Brethren, and exhort you as your Spiritual Father, and your sincerest friend, to weigh well and consider the present situation.

It is not to political discussion, but to religious reflection, I mean to call your attention, and therefore shall forbear to enquire into the original cause or causes of the present unhappy state of our country; the decision of this question would answer no purpose for you, where it is as obvious as it appears complicated. But surely, the first principles of our holy Religion, as you have learned it in Christ Jesus, inculcate and enjoin obedience to the laws and respect for the constituted authorities – that secret associations for the subversion of the order and peace of society, are unlawful and criminal, and that the guilt of such combinations is highly aggravated by attempting to confirm their engagements by the sanction of an oath – for an oath, my brethren, is a religious act – it is a solemn appeal to God...[and] an oath that is either false, or taken to bin to perpetration of any thing wicked, is the grossest and most direct affront to God – it is a sacrilegious profanation of his Adorable Name...Nothing can more effectually tend to bring down the judgments of God upon the country; for it is a fact that where the practice of taking a false or wicked oath gains ground, all manner of crimes grow common with it...Associate not with the Atheistical [sic] Incendiaries, who would extinguish that horror, which every *human* breast must feel against the execrable crimes of robbery and murder, by which the national character has of late been

attempted to be stained. Return to your usual occupations of industry and labor, and instead of bewildering your minds in speculations about government, which you cannot comprehend, endeavour to realize for yourselves and your families, the comforts which a patient and unwearied application to your respective avocations will not fail to produce...

But whilst I exhort you, my Brethren, patiently to endure whatever portion of evil, in the general distribution of Providence, may fall to your share, I would have you not unmindful of the blessings you enjoy, and the favors you have received. Certain privileges excepted, you possess the advantages of the Constitution. The penal laws, under which our fathers groaned, have been almost all done away. You have the comfort of exercising you holy Religion with out control, and to the benignity of Government, and to the liberality and wisdom of Parliament, we are indebted with a Roman Catholic College [at Maynooth], on a extensive plan, which will afford a liberal education to our youth, and a supply of Clergy to our Church when the present generation have finished their career. These are blessings – these are favors, that should excite and call forth our gratitude, and this gratitude we should evince by a steady attachment to the Constitution, and unshaken loyalty to our gracious Sovereign – a Sovereign, who has done more for the Roman Catholic Body...than any of his predecessors...

I am aware that my intention in this addressing you, Beloved Brethern, at this critical juncture, will be grossly misrepresented by the unprincipled incendiaries who wish to pervert and inflame your minds. – They will assert, as they often did before, that I act under the influence, and as a pensioner of Government – a calumny which I always despised, and should consider as unworthy of notice were it not for the impression that I hear this and similar falsehoods have made on the minds of some of the lower order of my flock...What then could be the views of the inventors, and propagators of these falsehoods? What end could they propose to themselves? No other, most assuredly, than to impose upon your credulity – to estrange your hearts and affections from the Pastors appointed by Almighty God to guide you in the ways of Salvation – to eradicate from your minds the belief of true Religion and morality, and thus to dispose you to adopt those Athesitical [sic] principles of French Fraternity, which have deluged Christendom with blood and carnage – spread havoc and devastation wherever they were introduced, and which have but a few weeks back pillaged and profaned the Capital of the Christian World [Rome], and robbed its peaceful and beneficent Prince, the venerable Head of our Church, of his territory and independence.

These are not the guides you should follow – their ways lead not to life but to death – *They come to you in sheep's clothing, exaggerating, and then pretending to feel your grievances; but they are inwardly ravening wolves. Beware then of these false Prophets*, listen to them no longer, but listen to the Oracle of Divine Wisdom which commands you to fear God, and honour the King, to respect and obey your Rulers...

Cork, April 26, 1798.