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To the people, priests, deacons and religious in County Louth

Dear brothers and sisters,

Some of you have been asking my advice regarding the forthcoming General Election. I offer you the following comments which are based mainly on a talk about the Family which I gave recently in Dublin. I also encourage you to read the statement issued by the Irish Episcopal Conference and make it available on your parish and personal social media and websites. You may also wish to include my comments which are attached.

With good wish and blessing,

Yours sincerely,

+ Eamon Martin

Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh



ARCHBISHOP EAMON MARTIN
Pastoral Message in preparation for the forthcoming General Election

Pope Francis has said: 'The family deserves special attention by those responsible for the common good, because it is the basic unit of society, which brings strong links of union that underpin human coexistence, and, with the generation and education of children, ensure the renewal and the future of society.'

At the recent Synod on the Family in Rome, the bishops said: 'A society that neglects the family has lost its access to the future.'

The State should go out of its way to support the family, and, among the many types of family that are out there, to support the uniqueness of the faithful and exclusive union between a married man and a woman and their children. In doing so, the State is not only caring for its citizens, but it is also strengthening and nurturing the foundations of society itself.

I encourage all those of voting age to exercise their democratic right to vote and to engage on the important issues with those politicians who are seeking election. The Irish Bishops have issued a joint statement, available on our diocesan website and on www.catholicbishops.ie.

Please ask those who seek your vote:

- * To what extent can you, in contemporary Ireland, support Family and Life, freedom of education and conscience, and a proper work-life balance, which respects the role of mothers and fathers?
- * What will your economic and social policies say to poorer families in Ireland, particularly those policies which impact directly on the family: the needs of children and the elderly; tackling the proliferation of drugs, alcohol, gambling and other addictive behaviours which can destroy home and family life?
- * How will your welfare policies and benefit programmes support families who are most in need and who are so easily targeted and exploited by loan sharks and other criminal elements?
- * How will you better assist young people who wish to establish a family, mortgage a home, take out insurance, but who may sometimes be convinced by economic policy to remain single?

Most importantly, because the right to life is the most fundamental right of all, ask them:

- * Will you continue to support the equal right to life of a mother and her unborn child as enshrined in the eighth amendment of the Constitution?

We must make it clear to those who wish our vote that there are no circumstances in which the direct killing of an unborn child can ever be justified.

The way we exercise our vote indicates the type of society that we wish to live in and the kind of environment in which we want our children and grandchildren to grow. We are grateful to all those women and men who have the courage to put themselves forward for election. To become an elected representative is a noble vocation; it can be challenging and stressful at times. We will continue to keep our elected representatives and all who govern our country in our prayers.

Yours sincerely,

+ Eamon Martin

Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh
18 February 2016