

Eames urges 'shared future' for Northern Ireland

Chris Ryder
In Belfast

ARCHBISHOP ROBIN Eames called on unionists and nationalists in Northern Ireland to grasp the future and find ways of living together during a valedictory sermon at St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh as he retired from his position as Church of Ireland primate on 31 December.

"We cannot pass on to a new generation the hatreds and divisions of the past," he said. "We have got to create a future under God where young people have real pride in their community."

"The Church, politicians and all of us leading ordinary lives must grasp the

opportunities for reaching that shared future which now present themselves."

His remarks echoed those made earlier in the customary joint New Year statement by the four main Church leaders in Ireland who called on people to pray for "an end to prejudice and sectarianism in the year ahead" and "to reject those words, attitudes and actions which fuel prejudice and sectarianism".

Dr Eames, the Catholic Primate; Archbishop Seán Brady; the Presbyterian Moderator, Dr David Clarke; and the Methodist president, Revd Ivan McElhinney, said that Northern Ireland once again faced a year of decision that would "either take us forward into a shared future with a mindset of mov-

ing forward together or leave us in the past, trapped by our grudges and prejudices".

The use of the term "shared future" is significant because it is the title chosen by the Government for a comprehensive programme of work to tackle sectarianism, foster reconciliation and improve inter-community relations.

The church leaders' call for "everyone to ... unite in a spirit of equality and respect for one another" chimes with this initiative and comes at a time when the main political parties are once more seeking to agree terms for the restoration of a devolved administration at Stormont after local elections scheduled in March.

(See interview, page 12.)



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