***Episcopal Ordination of Very Rev Alphonsus Cullinan***

***Opening remarks of***

***Most Rev William Lee***

***Bishop Emeritus of Waterford & Lismore***

***Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity***

***12th April 2015***

We have come together this afternoon in the Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity, Waterford, the oldest Roman Catholic Cathedral in Ireland, to celebrate the Eucharist and to invoke the blessing of the Holy Spirit on Fr. Alphonsus Cullinan, called to the office of Bishop in this diocese of Waterford and Lismore.

Today I welcome all of you to the Ordination. We are delighted to be joined on this grace filled occasion by so many of you from near and far.

* On this special day a very warm welcome to you Fr. Phoncie as our new Bishop.
* A welcome also to your family, relations, friends and your priest colleagues from the Diocese of Limerick.
* I welcome Lieut. Col. Michael Kiernan representing President Higgins and

Commandant Kieran Carey representing the Taoiseach.

* I welcome his Excellency the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Brown, Archbishop Eamon Martin of the Archdiocese of Armagh, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of the Archdiocese of Dublin, Archbishop Michael Neary of the Archdiocese of Tuam and Archbishop Kieran O’Reilly of the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly as well as Bishops from so many dioceses in Ireland.
* I welcome members of the Oireachtas and local civic representatives.
* On this special day for the diocese of Waterford and Lismore I want to greet and welcome Reverend Maria Jansson, Church of Ireland, Dean of Waterford, who is representing Bishop Michael Burrows.
* I welcome Reverend Sahr Yambusu, representing the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches.
* I welcome also the representatives from the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Society of Friends.

At the heart of this community here today are the people of Waterford & Lismore, lay, religious, and priests, whom I greet and welcome very warmly. We are gathered to welcome with joy and hope our new Bishop Elect Fr. Phoncie, to thank God for him and to pray for him with loving hearts.

This is truly, a historic day for all of us. We are privileged, Fr. Phoncie, to have you as our Bishop and you are certainly privileged to be entrusted with the care of the diocese of Waterford and Lismore. Our prayer for you today and in the years to come is that you will be touched, ever more deeply with the joy that comes from sharing with others what your faith in Jesus Christ means to you. We pray too that you will be richly blessed through being a member of the community of believers in this Diocese of Waterford and Lismore. You will discover in time that you have been called to serve in this diocese people - priests, deacons, religious and lay - who are deeply devoted to the Lord and to the Church which they love and who will be your greatest source of strength as their Bishop.

We celebrate the Ordination on the feast of the Divine Mercy – Divine Mercy Sunday. From the moment of his election to the Papacy, Pope Frances has captured the world’s attention through his simple message of God’s boundless love and mercy. His words at his very first Sunday angelus blessing were “Mercy is God’s greatest message”. And just days ago the Pope announced a Holy Year of Mercy celebrating God’s forgiveness. This Holy Year begins in December of this year. Pope Francis keeps emphasising this mercy of God and I quote, “What a beautiful truth this is for our lives, this mercy of God. God’s love for is so great, so deep. It is an unfailing love, one which always takes us by the hand, supports us and lifts us up. How beautiful is the loving gaze of Jesus on each of us – how much tenderness is there. Brothers and Sisters, let us never lose trust in the patience and mercy of God”. It is that mercy we celebrate today.

As always, when we come to the Eucharist, our first act is to open our hearts to receive the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness. As we acknowledge our sins we ask Him now to fill our hearts with His mercy and love.