

## **Group rejects bishop's views on Cobh Cathedral**

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The sanctuary of Cobh Cathedral was in complete conformity with present liturgical norms, contrary to views expressed by the Bishop of Cloyne in a letter read out at all Masses in the diocese on Sunday, the Friends of St Colman's Cathedral (FOSCC) claimed yesterday.

In a written statement, Dr John Magee argued that the constitutional autonomy of religious orders may have been undermined by An Bord Pleanála's refusal to allow internal construction work at the cathedral.

However, FOSCC says that this argument is irrelevant to St Colman's because the cathedral is owned by a secular trust established in Irish law which lacks all ecclesiastical and denominational character.

Adrian O'Donovan, of FOSCC, says he also regards it is a "gross misrepresentation" to suggest that the people of Cobh have been unable fully, actively and consciously to participate in the church's liturgy due to the cathedral's present design.

Trustees of the cathedral, including Dr Magee, insisted that plans to reorder the interior of St Colman's Cathedral were aimed at encouraging the congregation's full participation in the Mass in keeping with the thinking of the Second Vatican Council.

The architect for the cathedral trustees, Prof Cathal O'Neill, said that the present separation of the sacristy from the general assembly in St Colman's did not facilitate the laity's full participation. However, FOSCC says that the cathedral is in conformity with the present liturgical norms. Meanwhile, Mr O'Donovan says that FOSCC will continue to monitor the situation at St Colman's and any further applications to Cobh Town Council.

"We are also aware that an attempt may be made surreptitiously to introduce a series of alterations to the cathedral by means of a declaration," he said.

Last June, An Bord Pleanála refused planning permission for extensive alterations to the cathedral interior because they would "adversely affect the character . . . of a protected structure of national importance".

The board overturned Cobh Town Council's decision to approve plans by the trustees to reorder the cathedral's interior.