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3 May 2020

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

It has been very heartening to hear of all the ways that the priests and people of our diocese have discovered creative new ways to pray and to live our Christian vocation during this time of the Covid-19 lock down. For many it has been an important time of reflection and an occasion of blessing, while also a challenging time for so many who face much uncertainty.

Two years ago, on April the 26th I was ordained as the bishop for the diocese of Dunedin. During this time, I have been inspired by all the ways that ministry takes place in Otago and Southland. While there have been many blessings that have come with being your bishop, it has been a particularly testing and harrowing time for me personally. This letter is to let you know that I will be taking some time away from the diocese for personal and spiritual renewal, after which I look forward to returning with renewed energy and focus. During my time away, Fr Gerard Aynsley as the Vicar General will look after any responsibilities that would ordinarily be undertaken by the bishop.

Please keep me in your prayers as I will continue to keep you in mine.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'M. Dooley'.

Bishop Michael Dooley