Remarks by Cllr. John O'Leary, Mayor of Waterford City & County, on the 150th anniversary of bell ringing at Christchurch Cathedral, Waterford.

Saturday 30th July, 2022.

[Dean Hayes etc. insert appropriate greeting, religious, political etc.]

I am delighted to join you all today in this landmark building as you celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first ringing of the bells here at Christchurch.

The present bells, I'm told, were recast by the founders Mears and Stainbank of London before being formally handed over to the Dean of Waterford. The ringing of these bells on July 27th, 1872, by the Ancient Society of College Youths of London, was the first peal ever rung in Ireland. That peal lasted for 3 hours and 4 minutes – I'll try keep my speech somewhat shorter.

With the establishment of Waterford's Viking Triangle, and the prominence of this magnificent cathedral in that area, it is appropriate, I suppose, to ponder on what these walls have witnessed over the centuries in what has been a place of Christian worship for over 1000 years.

From the Vikings who settled in this area in the 10th century to the arrival of one of Ireland's first Christian bishops, Malchus, the Cathedral of the Holy and Undivided Trinity – to give Christchurch its proper name – has seen a broad sweep of history. The earlier bells we referred to, had to be hidden from Cromwell in the 1650s - in the crypt, I believe!

Moving through the years, the cathedral has seen its fair share of turmoil and unsettled Irish history but has stood firm as a place of community, a real focal point for Christians in Waterford. For that, you must all be commended. People of all religions and none, and from all corners of the world will receive a welcome here, whether it is

at a service, a musical event or simply for moments of quiet reflection. In these strange times, our world needs places like Christchurch more than ever.

The bell tower and spire have always been iconic in pictures of Waterford, and I'm told, have now been incorporated by the City & County Council into elements of new tourism branding, further elevating our city and indeed this building.

As one of the centrepiece buildings of our historic Viking Triangle, I am delighted to have attended several musical and community events here in the Cathedral, with today and the pealing of the bells being a particular highlight.

Finally, a note of thanks for the opportunity to join you here today. As Mayor of our City & County, I am delighted to have marked this anniversary and I thank Mr. De Courcy for the invite and information supplied to my office.

With God's blessing, in another 150 years, hopefully this great place will be celebrating its 300th anniversary and the city of Waterford will continue to hear the beautiful and pleasing sounds of the Christchurch bells.

Go raibh maith agaibh.