

12 May 2009

One minute's silence across the country in tribute to those who suffered loss during the Great Famine

This week, as a gesture of respect for and acknowledgement of those who died or suffered loss in the Great Famine, there will be one minute's silent reflection at public events across the country. Éamon Ó Cuív TD, Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Chair of the National Famine Commemoration Committee, warmly welcomes the decision of schools, sporting organisations, local authorities, community groups and religious organisations to support National Famine Memorial Day 2009.

Students in all primary and secondary schools will pause for one minute at noon on Friday May 15th to reflect on the loss of the Great Famine and contemplate famine and hunger worldwide. The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference has welcomed the Government decision to hold an annual day of commemoration for the Great Famine and has issued liturgy notes to all parishes for services on Sunday May 17th, the inaugural National Famine Memorial Day. In addition, Minister Ó Cuív has written to the Directors of Community and Enterprise in the local authorities to ask them to adopt the one minute's silence in all relevant community and public gatherings.

The Football Association of Ireland will observe a minute's silence at all matches under the Association's jurisdiction on Sunday 17th May. This will include the F.A.I. Youth Club Final at Turner's Cross. Tennis Ireland has invited all tennis clubs and organisations to participate in the minute's silence on National Famine Memorial Day on May 17th. The Gaelic Athletic Association, similarly, will observe the minute of silence at all G.A.A. championship matches, including televised matches, as well as the many thousands of club games in the 32 counties and overseas on that date. Special Olympics Ireland is also going to mark the commemoration with a minute's silence at all events on Sunday and the Irish Sports Council has been in touch with sports clubs and organisations nationwide to urge them to join in the tribute.

Minister Ó Cuív said: "I am delighted that so many groups and organisations have been so accommodating and willing to lend their support to the inaugural National Famine Memorial Day. It is a fitting tribute in acknowledgement of the loss suffered in Ireland in one of the greatest tragedies in our country's history. We have come such a long way since then, but it is important that we do not forget our past and the experiences that have shaped us as a people. Many people in the world still suffer from famine and hunger and we must use our experience and empathy to raise awareness of their plight. As well as the international commemoration in Canada last week and upcoming national event in Skibbereen on Sunday May 17th, communities around the country will be marking the Great Famine with their own, local commemorations. The minute's silence in schools, at religious services and at public and sporting events large and small, will reach people of all ages across the whole country."

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