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## Priests thanked for dealing with Troubles

By Diana Rusk

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MASS ARRIVAL: Priests arrive at St Peter's Cathedral in west Belfast for the Mass of the Chrism yesterday PICTURES:

Hugh Russell

The Bishop of Down and Connor has thanked the priests of the diocese for dealing with the demands of the Troubles during his last Chrism Mass.

Dr Patrick Walsh, who is to retire in the summer, said he was always conscious of how priests had to cope with conflict in Northern Ireland.

He highlighted the deaths of two priests, Fr Hugh Mullan and Fr Noel Fitzpatrick, killed by British soldiers as they administered the Last Rites.

Fr Mullan was shot in 1971 while administering the Last Rites – under a truce flag – to a wounded man.

Fr Fitzpatrick was killed the following year by an army sniper while administering to another wounded man.

"My 25 years as bishop have been years of change in the Church, years of change in society, they have been demanding years and in many respects turbulent years," Dr Walsh said.


"I have been very conscious of the demands placed on you and what many of you had to cope with over the horrific years of conflict and violence with two of our number, Fr Hugh Mullan and Fr Noel Fitzpatrick, shot dead, years in which you showed an exemplary steadfastness and remained at all times close to your people, especially those who were suffering."

Dr Walsh made the comments in St Peter's Cathedral in west Belfast at the Mass

of the Chrism, a ceremony which blesses oils for use during the following year.

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