



Down And Connor Diocesan Review 2014

Vicariate IV: Christ the Redeemer, Our Lady Queen of Peace , Lisburn (Blaris), St Anne's, Derriaghy, St Luke's, Nativity, Aghagallon & Ballinderry, Glenavy & Killead

Date: 13th May 2014

Venue: St Anne's Parish Hall

The people who gathered and heard some of the findings of our review identified the following as themes for our Diocese as we move into the future. Many of these themes were mentioned numerous times and using slightly different forms of words by the people who gathered that night.

Number of weddings, funerals and baptisms has stayed constant	High percentage of older priests	Projected number of priests is low	Decline in numbers of priests	More lay involvement in this vicariate than the Diocesan average	Age profile of Mass attenders in this vicariate is lower than the Diocesan average	There is increased lay involvement
General population is aging	Absence of young people at Mass	Diversity of priests' workload	Priests spend a lot of time on admin	Too many demands of Priests	20% Mass attendance	We have a duty to serve
The Church is alive	Fall in numbers of Religious	Numbers of Masses is still high	Priests are very committed	1500 people involved in pastoral ministry in this vicariate	Decline in Sunday Mass attendance	

Further to this, the people who gathered that night also considered what they felt the implications might be of the review and the themes above. In particular, they considered our situation in light of Pope Francis' words on Church in the following context:

- Church is Missionary
- We need to proclaim the Good News in the world today
- We need to be called to conversion and renewal- both individually and as a body

The following were seen as the implications for us as we go forward. Again, many of these implications were recorded a number of times and using slightly different forms of words.

We need to promote vocations	Lay people need training and knowledge of scripture for more involvement	Eucharistic services in the absence of priests during the week	Fewer Masses	Priests need to be freed up from so much admin and management tasks	Fewer priests will lead to less frequent Sacraments	Role of vicariate will be strengthened
Reduction in Masses is needed	Make faith fun and relevant	Spirit of good will and co-operation is crucial	We need to be realistic about our situation in the parishes	Do we need to restructure	Greater evangelical emphasis	More involvement of deacons
We all need to pray more	Review pre and post baptism courses in an effort to encourage parents to return	Reach out in hope to each other and build community	More lay involvement in admin	Engage the youth in Church	Church beyond the building	New modes of spreading the faith
Importance of schools	Change in mind set to greater acceptance of lay involvement	Create a sense of belonging in the parish	Teach the catechism to children	Church a place for sinners who welcome, love and don't judge	Inform parishioner of changes	Review estate management

Give a challenge to lay people	Train priests to reach out more to the community	Need a sense of ecumenical mission	Reorganise the services across the vicariate	Structured faith development for over 18s	Don't be afraid to try new ways	A forum for teenagers to discuss faith
Delegate no pastoral duties to lay people	Parishioners to visit schools	We all need to go out to mission in faith	We need to develop the practice of co-responsibility	Form small groups to strengthen all to go out	Reach out to the marginalised	We must get outside of our physical boundaries

We recognised that we were not making decision that night. Rather we were engaging in a conversation about what the possible implications were for our Diocese at this time. This was one of twelve vicariate meetings taking place over this next month or so. We made the following commitments:

- Living Church Team will travel and listen across the Diocese in these coming weeks
- Collate all the things said across the Diocese
- Inform the Bishop
- Invite other parts of the body of our Diocese to the same conversation - Bishops, Clergy, Council of Priests, Diocesan Pastoral Council for example
- We will all enter into a period of intentional discernment -
 - Pray
 - Meet
 - Discuss
- Come back around the end of the year to hear the fruits of that discernment and to discuss practically how we go about taking our next steps on our journey

In order to help us all in this period of intentional discernment, we would invite and encourage all to read Pope Francis' letter- **Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)** as well as Bishop Noel's Easter letter- **The lights of Heaven**. The texts will help us focus our prayers, thoughts and conversations as we travel together on the journey of faith in Down and Connor at this time.

“Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory. I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear. The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.”

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* n33

