



Down And Connor Diocesan Review 2014

Vicariate XI: Ballymena (Kirkinriola), Braid, Glenravel (Skerry), Ahoghill, Portglenone, Duneane, Antrim, Randalstown (Drumaul)

Date: 12th June 2014

Venue: Ballymena

The people who gathered and heard some of the findings of our review identified 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.

Further to this, the people who gathered also considered what they felt the implications might be of the review. 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

Below are the collated comments of the people that night.

A lot is happening already. We need to be involved more	How to engage young people-parents' role	Fewer clergy	The role of women-time to change	Fewer volunteers to carry out pastoral roles	Reorganise Mass times in all surrounding parishes to suit the needs of the people	A meaningful relationship with Jesus
---	--	--------------	----------------------------------	--	---	--------------------------------------

Structures required- parish mentor?	Evangelising without priests	60% are over 40 years	Reduce sermon time and make it relevant	More openness needed- not a dictatorship	Change the nature of priesthood	Co-ordination/ collaboration/ sharing between parishes
After Baptism keep up the link between grand parents	Success of Legion if Mary dropping off leaflets to homes	Where is the missing 80% and how to engage them	Not enough clergy	Poor Mass attendance	More lay involvement	Lay people to take on core 'non' religious activities
Some clergy unwilling/ not prepared to delegate and let go	Faith development for laity	Social media to engage youth	Ageing priests	Support for young Catholic families	Let priests do the job they are supposed to	Positive influence of education and the opportunities it offers
Support for priests	Women deacons?	Reasons to hope!	Social justice	To promote marriage as opposed to partnership	Look to other models (churches and organisation)	Happy to have administrative units but must keep parish identity
Priests older and fewer but still as many parishes	Better guidance to live the faith in life	Inter parish contact	Baptism and wedding number steady	Sense of belonging is very important	Parishioners (esp youth) to have a say in the running of the parish)	Committee to assist with finances and general management in the parish
Work together as a community	Clergy to support lay involvement	Invite people	Bishop Noel remote	GAA teams to Mass	Revitalise groups and orgs	Parish Councils need to take responsibility for running the parish
Small parishes need to get together	Know your faith	Pray	Deacons	A more welcoming church needed	Show initiative	Evangelise

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 who will write to the Diocese with proposals for going forward
- 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

