

'GO MAKE DISCIPLES'

Waterford & Lismore Diocesan Pastoral Plan

2019–2024



MESSAGE FROM BISHOP CULLINAN

Faced with a changed world and a changed Church, we must ask: what is the vision for our diocese now? What is the Holy Spirit saying to us at this critical point in our history?

I put before you a vision for the future of the Church in this diocese which has arisen from the Listening Process which took place across the diocese last year. The core of this vision is summed up in the title of our new diocesan plan: 'Go Make Disciples' (Mt 28:19).

Jesus says in the Gospel of John: 'By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples' (15:8). What does the Lord mean by the phrase 'bear fruit'?

In his last recorded words on earth before the Ascension, Jesus says: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt 28:19–20).

Bearing fruit is essentially this: making disciples. You and I are called to reach out to everyone without exception, but with an emphasis on apostolate with young people. In his marvellous document on evangelisation today, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), Pope Francis urges us to be missionary disciples.

This new Diocesan Pastoral Plan requires a change of mentality, moving 'from maintenance to mission' (see Fr James Mallon in his book, *Divine Renovation*). Father Mallon and his parish renewal programme, called 'Divine Renovation', has been a key inspiration for our new plan. We cannot do the same things we have always done and expect a different result. The culture around us is not neutral. It is now largely anti-Christian (see EG, 2). While we all acknowledge the many wonderful things that surround us each day, we also recognise the forces that operate against the truth about human life, marriage and the family – their origin, sanctity, and ultimate end. Continuing as before is not an option.

Going out to make disciples cannot happen unless there is a renewal within. Pope Francis invites 'all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ' (EG, 3). We always begin with Christ and we note the urgency in the Pope's plea. No one will want to be part of a community that is spiritually dead.

In order to better manage this evangelical approach we will need a greater emphasis on team ministry in new Pastoral Units across the diocese, where small groups of parishes, their clergy and trained laity will work in teams to go out and 'bear fruit' along with the faithful. A greater emphasis on Adult Faith Formation is necessary and the Alpha Programme is being rolled out across the diocese to rekindle faith in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour who forms us into his missionary disciples. Further Adult Faith Formation programmes will build on this. May this plan map out the way forward for our diocese for the next five years, noting the specific goals to be reached after the first two years.

I entrust this new Diocesan Pastoral Plan entirely to the care of Our Mother Mary, conscious that we are totally dependent on the Holy Spirit who goes before us, opening hearts and minds. God wants us to be missionary disciples, to work through us, to love him above all things and then to bring others closer to Christ through his Church.

+ *Phonice Cullinan*

INTRODUCTION

The Waterford and Lismore 2019–2024 Pastoral Plan ‘Go Make Disciples’ sets out a programme of renewal in our diocese over the next five years. Launched on the feast of Pentecost, 9 June 2019, it is an expression of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit who ‘makes all things new’, and of our hope that under the guidance of the Spirit, our parishes will be invigorated and hearts set on fire once more.

The Pastoral Plan is based on the process of becoming disciples. A disciple is one whose life has been transformed by the encounter with Christ and is committed to grow in faith and knowledge of the God revealed in Christ. The disciple is called to be actively engaged in the faith community and to grow in holiness through prayer and worship. And finally they must ‘go’ and serve the transformation of the world and to be a missionary disciple. The Pastoral Plan is structured around these four marks of discipleship from which the themes of the plan emerge. These are: Evangelisation, Community, Liturgy and Prayer, and Service. Core strategic objectives and actions are listed in the plan to advance these four themes. These are summarised here.

THEME 1: EVANGELISATION

Becoming an evangelising Church; proclaiming the Gospel of Christ

AT PARISH LEVEL

Objective To prioritise the urgent call to provide opportunities for New Evangelisation in the diocese, so that we become disciples of Christ

Action Alpha Programme (or a similar type programme) to be organised in each parish or group of parishes annually for the next five years

AT DIOCESAN LEVEL

Objective To review the preparation for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation

Action Establish a committee, representative of all stakeholders, with clear terms of reference to carry out a discerning process across the diocese

Objective To develop the programme for Youth Ministry in the diocese and explore ways of communicating with young people

Action Appoint a Diocesan Director of Youth Ministry

THEME 2: COMMUNITY

Creating communities of faith characterised by hospitality, belonging and acceptance; service to families, young people, the sick and marginalised

Objective Prompted by the Gospel to promote a greater spirit of hospitality in each parish

Action Put together a Welcome Pack for new residents in the parish area which would include a registration form. The pack to be delivered by envelope distributors

Objective To create an environment of support for bereaved families

Action Establish a Funeral Team in each Pastoral Unit to support families with funeral rituals

THEME 3: LITURGY AND PRAYER

Enhancing the quality of our liturgical celebrations and providing opportunities for spiritual growth in order to grow in the love of God and of one another

AT PARISH LEVEL

Objective To ensure that our Sunday eucharistic celebrations are meaningful, transformative and leading us to holiness

Action Due to the shortage of priests, rationalise Sunday Mass times and ensure that resources are concentrated and focused to encourage more meaningful eucharistic celebrations.

Objective To provide opportunities for people to grow in holiness

Action Where established, dialogue with Parish Prayer Groups and Eucharistic Adoration Teams by Spring 2020 to offer support and identify needs

AT DIOCESAN LEVEL

Objective To enhance the quality of all liturgical celebrations in the diocese

Action Recommission and revitalise the Diocesan Liturgical Commission by appointing new members and clarifying goals of the commission

Objective To ensure Liturgies of the Word are reverent and meaningful

Action Provide training for lay leaders of Liturgies of the Word

THEME 4: SERVICE

Remodelling leadership and governance structures to serve the mission of evangelising and transforming the world

SECTION A – REMODELLING LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Objective To ensure that priests are supported and cared for in these challenging times when the number of priests is rapidly declining and the age profile of clergy is rising

Action Organise a conference for clergy at least twice each year to discuss issues such as ongoing formation in theology, leadership skills, realistic expectations, health and well-being, coping with the current reality, etc.

Objective Establish new models of governance and leadership in the diocese

Action Appoint a new Director of Pastoral Development

Action Identify and establish Pastoral Units throughout the diocese*

Action Establish Team Ministry in each Pastoral Unit

THEME 4: SERVICE

Remodelling leadership and governance structures to serve the mission of evangelising and transforming the world

SECTION B – SERVING THE MISSION

Objective	To ensure that the work of the Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee in all its various aspects will continue to be fully supported and developed
Action	All Church personnel who interact with children/young people and vulnerable adults must attend safeguarding training and be Garda vetted to comply with legislation
Objective	To promote justice and peace in accordance with the social teaching of the Church
Action	Establish a Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission to advocate on behalf of the homeless and other justice issues which are impacting on the local community
Objective	To promote awareness of Pope Francis' encyclical <i>Laudato Si'</i> and to encourage actions which respect the environment and counteract the threat of global warming
Action	Informed by the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission, each Parish Pastoral Council to decide on a few key actions which promote a more eco-friendly environment in parishes

* Note on Pastoral Units

A Pastoral Unit is number of parishes co-operating together with two, three or four priests ministering together as a team to meet the pastoral needs of these parishes. The team will work collaboratively with the Pastoral Unit Council.

PLEA TO ALL PARISHIONERS

All Christians are called to respond with generosity of spirit to implement our Pastoral Plan in parishes throughout the diocese. We are facing an unprecedented crisis in our Church: as society becomes more and more secularised, congregations are dwindling and there is a dramatic decline in priestly vocations. This is the era of the laity. All are gifted by the Spirit and called to exercise their gifts as missionary disciples to build up the Kingdom of God.



**Where can you view the full
Diocesan Pastoral Plan?**

**A limited number of printed copies
of the plan are available on request
in each parish.**

**You can also view and download a copy
of the plan from the diocesan website:**

www.waterfordlismore.ie

