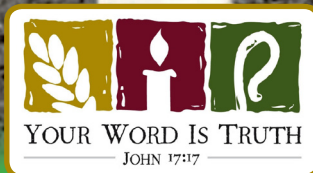


ARCHDIOCESE OF CASHEL AND EMLY  
September 2017

# Prepare the way of the Lord

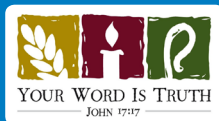


A Pastoral Letter  
from  
Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly



*Archbishop Kieran has invited different groups of people to begin the process of reflecting, discerning and organising together to examine the present reality of our church today and to chart out a path for the future.*

# *“Prepare the way of the Lord”*



*“The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts  
and lives of all who encounter Jesus”.*

With these words Pope Francis begins his pastoral letter the *“Joy of the Gospel”*. His letter is a call to each one of us to live our Baptismal calling in the service of the Gospel.

## **Our Church in Cashel and Emly**

Since coming to the Archdiocese I have had the opportunity to visit all 46 parishes and I have experienced the commitment of so many people to their parish. In particular, the conferring of the Sacrament of Confirmation highlights the important role of schools and the dedication of teachers, parents, priests as well as parishioners. The growth in faith of the young people receiving the sacraments is a concern as they are the future of our church. Therefore, we have to plan on how best we will share and pass on the light of faith.



## **The Way of the Lord**

Each generation of believers is called *“to prepare the way of the Lord”* (Matthew 3:3), to be the leaven in the world, the light that invites others to share Christ. I have chosen this title for this letter as we are now, in our time, called to answer important questions about our faith and how we live it, how we prepare ourselves and the young to be people of faith.

In the Archdiocese, over the past two years, I have invited different groups of people to begin the process of reflecting, discerning and organising together to examine the present reality of our church today and to chart out a path for the future.





## Phase 1: The Diocesan Pastoral Council

The Diocesan Pastoral Council – comprising of women and men, priests and religious sisters from across the Archdiocese, have begun this journey of reflection and discernment on my invitation. The members of the DPC have engaged with this over two years – drawing up a draft vision statement for the diocese and have worked to develop the key elements of a mission statement.



## Phase 2: Working Together

The Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests have held joint meetings to explore how working together will benefit the future of the Archdiocese. Our Priests and the Diocesan Pastoral Council members have also met to explore the future together. This stage of planning was greatly assisted by the representatives from neighbouring dioceses who have already undertaken different forms of consultation with parishioners throughout their dioceses. Based on their advice we will formulate a “listening process” that will reflect the realities of the Archdiocese.

## Phase 3: The Listening Process

The journey has now reached an important moment - a wider invitation is now being extended, through this letter, to each and every member of the Church in Cashel and Emly to participate in a process of listening, discernment and planning for the future of our Church in the Archdiocese.

Over the coming months, I invite the people and priests of each of our parishes to engage with this listening process. I also invite those who have, for various reasons, left our church communities to make their contribution to the process.

## Phase 4: Pastoral Planning

Following on the Listening Process there will be a further phase when together we will lay out a pastoral plan for the coming years.

However, we must firstly focus upon a genuine listening process (Phase 3) and I encourage all to participate fully.



# *“Prepare the way of the Lord”*



As we set out on this journey I would like to pay tribute to the wonderful pastoral, spiritual and social groups that have functioned within the parishes of the Archdiocese for many years. The organisations and groups within the Church play a significant role in the life of the local Church and I hope they will continue to do so.

## **Pastoral Team**

A Pastoral team with lay and clerical members will oversee pastoral development in the Archdiocese. The team will be led by Fr Martin Hayes who was recently appointed as the full-time Director for Pastoral Planning and Development. He will engage with the people and priests of each parish, oversee and organise the listening process and also plan and lead new pastoral initiatives.

There are many challenges and opportunities facing the Church not only in the Archdiocese but also in Ireland and beyond. One such opportunity in the near future is the International World Meeting of Families (WMOF) in Dublin, in August 2018. In the preparation for this international gathering we will have an opportunity to pray and reflect on the Christian family.

## **Conclusion**

I place the journey ahead under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I invite all to participate - all are welcome. John the Baptist prepared the coming of the Lord in his time. Now is our time. Let us join together to see how best we can respond to the gift of our Baptism by preparing the way of the Lord in our lives and the lives of our communities.

+ *Kieran O'Reilly*

