

Draft Pastoral Plan – Cashel & Emly – March 2020

Our Priorities – Seeds of Hope

Faith & Spirituality, Youth & Family, Community, Liturgy and Leadership.

1. Faith and Spirituality:

The **Listening process** told us that:

Faith is still truly alive in people's lives.

That people are searching for God and need opportunities to explore their faith in new ways: discussion/dialogue/prayer.

However, people are struggling to communicate their faith at this time. It is increasingly difficult for the Church and individual people of faith to communicate the Christian message in today's society. Social media is both a challenge and an opportunity for the expression of Christian faith values.

Spirituality is really the foundation of a creative parish. It embraces the collective understanding of the people as to who they are and what they are essentially about. It is the collective sense they have of Jesus and his Gospel. It gives them a sense of mission that is nourished by prayer and reflection. To contemplate is to see and to minister is to make visible. We strive to do both in the parish situation. If people from outside were to visit our parish; would they sense the presence of God - a certain spirit in our parish?

The Diocesan Plan will develop a strategy for:

1. Faith Formation for children and parents;

- a. In conjunction, with the Grow in Love Programme Primary School Religious Education as well as the Do This in Memory (Holy Communion) and Living Witnesses (Confirmation) Programmes.
- b. Liaison with Secondary School Religious Education staff and students from the neighbouring parishes through the Secondary School Chaplaincy alongside the currently available John Paul 11 Awards and Seinn liturgical music initiatives.

2. Ongoing Faith Formation

- a. Affirmation and development of Prayer Groups based upon the Scriptures and on traditional devotions.
- b. We can continue faith formation in the intervals between sacraments for children and encourage adult faith development with e.g. historical faith walks/pilgrimages in our parishes. Such pilgrimage walks in areas with links to the celebration of faith in historic times offer the opportunities for meaningful conversations

about faith and stimulate spiritual growth. Each parish is encouraged to find ways of telling the faith history of the parish, holy wells, Mass paths, grottos, etc.

- c. Study of the Scriptures at times suitable for people - retired people during the day and others at night. Currently, the Diocesan Biblical Apostolate Resource Group is working to develop Scripture Sharing / *lectio divina* Groups throughout the diocese.
- d. Develop introductory theology courses at M.I.C. Thurles complimented by the formation of discussion groups on topics that are relevant to people to-day, care of the environment, social justice, parental concerns for children, addiction, contemporary issues including the impact of recent scientific discoveries and the papal encyclicals.
- e. Offer retreats and publicise the details of retreat centres for those who would wish to take time out for reflection and discernment.
- f. Communication with relevant personnel in other dioceses to share ideas and resources for Faith Development.

2. Youth & Family

Our Diocesan Listening Process Report indicates that we must engage with young people to enable them to lead initiatives and that families, in particular young parents, have a significant role in the faith development of their children, in conjunction with their schools. **This focus upon youth and family can be developed as follows:**

YOUTH

1. **A forum for listening to young people;**
 - a. Young people must be involved in developing a new model of Church, e.g. through Youth Pastoral Councils alongside Parish /Pastoral Area Pastoral Councils. As we heard in our Listening Process; *“Young people would love you to listen to them ... we could learn a lot from them”*. This means optimising the use of the positive aspects of social media so as to enable the realisation of young people’s desire for a sense of community and belonging.
 2. **Affirm what is in current practice:**
 - a. We must acknowledge the initiatives that are currently underway in the diocese, e.g. John Paul 11 Awards, Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage, Seinn liturgical music with secondary schools, Confirmation retreats, parish youth/folk choirs, Family Masses and youth groups like Journey in Faith in some parishes.
 - b. Our Diocesan Youth Forum is currently engaged in developing a one year pilot programme for Transition Years drawn from 5 parishes and schools in the diocese which is due to begin in September 2020. It will offer an opportunity for young people to support each other through meeting regularly for activities (indoor and outdoor), pilgrimages, leadership training, discussions and prayer. The learnings from this pilot project will be used to design a diocesan youth programme.
 - c. The diocese will develop resources to provide ongoing support for young people, e.g. Youth Choirs, Seinn, Encounter, Night-fever, World Youth Day and initiatives to foster personal prayer and meditation.
3. **Training in Leadership for young people;** young people must be supported with faith leadership training, e.g. Meitheal, in conjunction with training for adult youth leaders. The concern for community issues that young people express in secondary schools can be utilised to promote

actions for social and climate justice, e.g. as promoted by Trocaire.

4. **A person to co-ordinate all this;** the employment of a Diocesan Youth Support Person to co-ordinate the initiatives for young people, to liaise with schools and parishes, and to develop training programmes.

FAMILY

1. **Openness;** that we be open to the diversity of the different kinds of families living in our parishes today.
2. **Welcome;** parishes are encouraged to actively welcome initiatives for families, in particular, young families with Youth / Family Masses, supported by Godly Play, Youth Choirs and the creation of youth spaces in their Churches, as well as events which engage with the wider community.
3. **Leadership Training for Parents/Guardians;** The faith leadership skills of young parents to be developed in conjunction with the Grow in Love primary schools Religious Education programme.
4. **Diocesan Support** is required to encourage the parish communities to build upon the connection with their Primary schools, e.g. through sacramental preparation programmes, Do this in Memory, Living Witnesses, in conjunction, with the *Faith & Spirituality* Pastoral Priority.

Finally, events for young people and families; All of the above initiatives for young people and families will be complemented with regular Diocesan events, e.g. at Holycross, Glenstal, Glendalough, Taize, Rome, pilgrim paths around the diocese. Events such as the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) event held in April 2018 at Tipperary Racecourse using WMOF resources and programmes involving all the generations, young people, parents and grandparents may also be convened.

3. Community

Listening Process:

- **Belonging to a community** is an essential need that has existed since time began. It is therefore no surprise that one of the strongest themes to emerge from the listening process, was the importance of the relationship between parish, faith, community and place.
- **People really value community** and there is a strong relationship between parish, faith-community, belonging and a sense of place. That wonderful joy is gained from giving to community and volunteering. Parishes can be centres of hospitality and inclusion.

The plan for Community will focus on the following areas:

1. Be a welcoming community in our Parish:

“Ar scath a cheile a mhaireann na daoine”.

This *seanfhocal* reminds us that community is very human. Therefore, when we reflect on how welcoming our parish community is we need to consider:

- a. Who is our community? How are we a welcoming parish, who is being welcomed and would people have a sense that this parish is welcoming?
- b. How can the parish community cherish, enhance and develop the lives of all in the community in accord with our calling to be one caring community bonded together as the Body of Jesus Christ?
- c. How can we create an environment that will foster a sense of welcome harmony, belonging, safety and justice so as to discover and celebrate the riches hidden in each other’s diversity?

2. To link with other groups in the Parish:

Liaise with other groups in the Parish who have similar goals and work with them in facilitating the development of a vibrant caring community that can:

- a. Identify needs and utilize talents and resources to create a safe environment where all can individually and collectively benefit as well as being able to make their contribution.
- b. Find ways to ensure that the parish community is an inclusive one where all are welcome to engage and participate.

Minority groups including: travelling community, LGBT+, migrants from other cultures and divorced or separated people should all have a place in the faith community.

- c. Create a sense of belonging in the Parish for everyone by initiating opportunities to meet over cups of tea etc. and gatherings which ensure that people experience a genuine Ceád míle fáilte.

3. Foster Cohesion among all involved in Pastoral Ministry.

Actively promote joint periodic consultative gatherings with all involved in pastoral ministry (Liturgy groups, Eucharistic Ministers, Readers, etc.) to:

- a. Promote and organise events that contribute to the ongoing development of faith and community.
- b. Develop a sense of social inclusion in a welcoming venue where families and friends can enjoy refreshments in an inviting and cordial environment after the many church and parish events.

4. Technology:

Investigate how technology can be used to communicate, engage with and welcome people with:

- a. Positive constructive use of social media,
- b. Parish and diocesan websites,
- c. Community radio,
- d. Text alerts,
- e. Use of sign language and other languages.

4. Liturgy

The Listening Process told us that:

- We like to gather to **celebrate** key moments in our lives, that of our families and parish communities. Liturgical Celebrations are important in people's lives – from Sunday Mass to Family Masses, Funeral Masses, marriage celebrations, youth masses and remembering our dead.
- People enjoy being involved and participating in ceremonies with music, singing and creativity. Also, people value homilies that provide hope, encouragement and that link the Gospel message to everyday life.
- There is a search for new types of celebration such as prayer services, meditation, outdoor celebrations and Dawn Masses, Graveyard Masses and Pilgrim Walks... There is a particular desire to create liturgies with music and to move outdoors in order to celebrate the gift of the natural world and express our care for our environment, in accord with the message of *Laudato Si'* by Pope Francis.
- **The Diocesan plan for Liturgy will focus on the following areas:**

1. The Weekend Liturgy, the Mass:

- a. Music: to examine how the liturgy of the Mass can be enhanced with Choir and Music. The Diocesan Choir project will be developed to help support the Parishes in making music an important part of the Liturgy, e.g. using technology and Cantors to assist.
- b. The Homily, e.g. visiting speakers on occasion at Mass who would share their experiences and perhaps challenge congregations in the practice of their faith in their day to day living.
- c. That the people and priests of neighbouring parishes give consideration to the number and times of Masses in their area with a view to ensuring vibrant, life-giving and meaningful liturgies.

2. Developing options and guidance on Themed Masses:

- a. These are Masses which are focused on a particular theme or group e.g. Advent, the heritage of the Parish, Family, exams, blessing of the jerseys of the parish teams, recently baptised, Faithful Departed, children who died in infancy or before birth, etc.

3. Developing and acknowledging the contribution of the various Ministries in the Parish:

- a. That we encourage and develop the various ministries: Eucharistic Ministers, Baptism Preparation, Readers, Cleaners, and Sacristans so that every parish will have the skills and expertise to support the various liturgies.
- b. It will be important that all those involved in Parish would have a day /event for reflection and to acknowledge their contributions through their work.

4. Developing the capacity for the Parish to have hold Liturgies where Mass cannot be a regular daily event.

- a. Look at how scripture sharing / lectio divina groups can be further developed in parishes with the support of the Diocesan Biblical Apostolate Resource Group.
- b. Use the Liturgy of the Hours, the Prayer of the Church, Morning and Evening Prayer.
- c. Develop a liturgy group in each Parish/group of parishes to support such initiatives.

5. Resources to be available, on-line sharing and staff.

- a. To provide support, expertise and resources to help parish to support the development of the Liturgy in each parish. This can be co-ordinated by a Diocesan Liturgy Commission made up of personnel from throughout the diocese already involved in parish liturgy and music.

5. Leadership:

From the Listening process it was recognised that:

Leadership into the future is a challenge for all of us and it has to be seen as a challenge for all of us. We are on a journey together and we have to be the change for the future.

There is great respect for the work that many priests have done in the past but the Church is changing now and the priest-led Church of the past will need to embrace a partnership approach with people.

A new style of church leadership is challenging as it requires a deeper trust in lay people and, in particular, the inclusion of women in leadership roles as a priority into the future.

Leadership Training is required for laity and priests.

In looking to the future, we need to address the issues of communication, justice & peace and climate change.

The Diocesan plan for Leadership;

The focus of the proposed Diocesan plan for Leadership will be underpinned by the principle of 'co-responsibility'. It recognises all the skills in the Parish so as to encourage people to become actively involved in the mission of the Church. The emphases is on people using their gifts and talents to enrich the faith and the community.

1. A Pastoral Leadership Group in each Parish:

- a. That every Parish will have a pastoral leadership group who will be able to support the work of the Parish and guide its work to help nurture the faith into the future. The group will encourage parishioners to get actively involved in the mission of the Church, using their gifts to enrich the community.
- b. These Parish leadership groups will be supported in their work by Pastoral Workers and through developing the ability of members to best do their work in the future.
- c. The pastoral leadership group is to be formed in an open and transparent way to ensure representation and consist of members of the faith community motivated by a desire to be of service to the wider community. Its aim is to identify the pastoral needs of the parish and co-ordinate a response with shared decision-making in the context of prayer and the acknowledgement of the wisdom, life experience and relevant pastoral/theological expertise of each member.

2. Training: There is a need to provide training at two levels:

- a. For Priests and Lay people to move towards this new model of co-responsibility. It will mean greater participation by people, the use of facilitation skills, and greater involvement in decision making by lay people and the development of the ability to communicate with all parishioners.
- b. A key consideration for the future is the development of lay ministry programmes in Pastoral Care and Catechetics. Leaders need to continue to be developed for the various roles in the Parish, e.g. Liturgy, Sacramental Preparation, Finance, Faith Development, Ministers of the Eucharist, Readers, etc. which can be enhanced with the study of the Scriptures and Theology.
3. **Communication:** the communication of the work of the Diocese and the Parish is a challenge today. All avenues of communication, especially, the positive aspects of social media, need to be utilised, particularly, with young people so that they can make their contribution to the future direction of the Church. The role of the Diocesan Director of Communications can be enhanced with a communications policy that has as its initial focus, the new direction of the diocese in the area of Pastoral Planning & Development. The diocesan website requires development to ensure access to resources for sacramental preparation and the celebration of liturgical seasons so as to support Religious Education teachers in schools and liturgy groups in parishes.

4. **Structures:** at a Diocesan level the relationship between the Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) and the Council of Priests (CoP), modelled upon co-responsibility continues to develop so that the Pastoral Strategy Group can fulfil its role of implementing the Pastoral Plan. The DPC itself, is working to ensure that it is representative and equipped to support the work of the Diocese and the Parishes for the duration of the Plan. There will have to be consideration given to how best to group parishes, e.g. pastoral areas and how pastoral support will be provided to particular groups, e.g. young people and families.
5. **Pastoral Workers:** Pastoral Planning & Development into the future will require the appointment of pastoral workers to support Parishes in implementing the pastoral plan.
6. **Integrity of Creation, Justice & Peace Diocesan Group:** Throughout the diocese a number of parish based eco-spirituality groups have been established arising from the publication of *Laudato Si'* (Caring for our Common Home) by Pope Francis. The formation of such 'Integrity of Creation' groups in parishes alongside those concerned

with Justice and Peace needs to be supported at diocesan level. In view of the effects of climate change, the planning for the life of our parish communities throughout the diocese needs to take account of the life of our surrounding natural world – an issue which is of particular concern for young people. As a rural diocese we must engage with our young people on this issue and work together with the farming community to give consideration to *'What can our diocese/parish do to promote care for the environment?'*

- a. At a practical level, each parish can promote the wellbeing of the planet by:
- an energy audit of parish buildings and act on the recommendations,
 - manage church green areas to promote biodiversity and
 - co-operation with groups like Tidy Town Committees to support initiatives that encourage recycling, tree planting, wild flower gardens, allotments.

Our diocese can continue to develop our ecological awareness, in particular, with young people using resources like Cabragh Wetlands, Holycross.

Our draft vision as we plan towards 2025

The faith Community of Cashel and Emly being a people centred in Jesus Christ is a vibrant community of service and mission guided by the Holy Spirit representing the living values of the Gospel. It is a humble and listening community that in being alert to our changing world, is hopeful, seeks to be open, inclusive, has prayer at its centre and is welcoming to everyone.

This is underpinned by the following values:

We will work to promote inclusivity by being a welcoming community and will support people in their everyday struggles.

The diocese will recognise the giftedness of each individual and develop the talents of everyone involved in the leadership of the church.

We will actively promote God's love through promotion of Gospel values and humble ways of being Church.

We will develop the practice of prayer and praying within our community.