

**MESSAGE FROM
ARCHBISHOP BRADY TO THE
PEOPLE OF THE
ARCHDIOCESE WITH REGARD
TO THE DIOCESAN
PASTORAL PLAN**

As Christ invited Peter, so the late Pope John Paul II invited all of us, at the beginning of the new millennium to put out into the deep. The 'deep' is at once the inexhaustible mystery of God and the 'deep' of human history with all its changes and challenges.

In its efforts to draft a Pastoral Plan, this diocese has been attempting to put out into the deep in recent times. We have been trying to examine the signs of the times, discuss the challenges they indicate and decide upon an appropriate response to them. This has involved a lot of discussion and consultation, prayer and reflection. As we do so, we see more clearly how the Church reveals God's plans for each one of us and leads us to our final destiny - eternal glory. We realise that Christ, in fulfilment of his promise to be with his followers always, is constantly present through the working of the Holy Spirit. When we are attentive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, our hearts become more like the heart of Christ. We are moved to love as Christ loved.

The Holy Spirit provides the life giving energy needed to bring about change in the heart of a parish or a diocese. The Holy Spirit assists us to make that change in order to see more clearly what God wants for us and how we should respond. The challenge therefore is to discover just what the Holy Spirit is inspiring us to do here and now.

One way our diocese has sought the Spirit's direction for the path of future development

has been through the regional consultation process among the people of the diocese, which took place last Lent. There was an excellent response at that time to the invitation to share views and to point towards new possibilities, despite clouds of darkness and confusion. Since then a lot of good work has been undertaken to implement aspects of the consultation process and move these ideas towards a pastoral plan for the diocese. You might recall from my previous message, last Pentecost, that nine working groups were established to undertake this work. This letter contains a brief report from each of those groups, setting out what has been achieved so far.

The work of the Spirit so often invisible and usually imperceptible nevertheless has effects which are beyond measuring. So too this work is in its infancy, but I have every confidence that these small, early steps responding to the promptings of the Spirit will produce great fruit. Our ongoing discussions will also help to develop the mission in conformance with God's plan, and will help each one of us to play our part in that divine plan, as we are each called to do.

I pray God's blessing upon you all, that together we may discern his will for his people and his Church, so that directed by his Spirit we may be inspired by his Word, sustained by his sacraments and filled with his charity and compassion for one another.



Archbishop of Armagh

**PALS WORKING GROUP
CHAIR: VERY REVEREND MICHAEL
O'DWYER, PP, PORTADOWN**

The PALS (the name we have given ourselves) working group have been given the challenge of putting into practice:

- Parish pastoral council;
- Attending to diocesan and parish structures;
- Leadership and training;
- Surveys - diocesan and parish.



The group decided to focus first of all on parish pastoral councils and the diocese is committed to having parish pastoral councils up and running in every parish by December 2007. Some parishes have

parish pastoral councils and others are in the process of forming them. Part of the working group's mission is to involve and educate parishioners and clergy on what parish pastoral councils do and remove any fears or misconceptions people may have. In the Church of the 21st century parish pastoral councils are the way forward to promoting active involvement in the Church at local level, i.e. parish, and in the wider domain of diocesan, national and universal Church.

To this end PALS have conducted and are organising the following:

- Parish survey – information on existing parish pastoral councils:

- Clergy conference – to promote parish pastoral councils;
- Six pilot parishes – to begin the process of forming a parish pastoral council;
- Design a new training programme.

YOUTH MINISTRY WORKING GROUP

CHAIR: REV GERARD CAMPBELL, CC, ST PATRICK'S PARISH, DUNDALK

- In January 2005 Ms Kate Acton was employed as diocesan youth director.
- In September 2005 the Dundalk vicariate (St. Patrick's, St. Joseph's, Holy Family and Holy Redeemer) employed Ms Jane Keaveney as youth minister.
- Armagh Diocesan Youth Council (ADYC) plans to have another vicariate youth minister employed in the northern part of the diocese by March 2007.
- ADYC believes parish youth councils (as suggested in the diocesan pastoral plan), must be part of and not separate from parish pastoral councils. ADYC will promote, encourage and become involved in this development.
- Through the auspices of the diocesan youth director, ADYC will continue to offer ongoing support to parishes who wish to develop youth ministry.
- There are presently twenty-eight parishes who have youth ministry representatives. With the help of parish personnel the youth director plans to increase this number and develop the role of parish representatives.
- The first diocesan Youth Mass will be held in Portadown on 30th April. It is intended that this annual liturgy will be hosted and prepared by a different parish youth group each year.
- An ADYC newsletter will be in place by June 2006. An updated ADYC website will be in place by September 2006.



FAMILY MINISTRY AND LIFE ISSUES WORKING GROUP

CO-CHAIRS: REV ANDREW McNALLY AND DEBRA SNODDY, OFFICE OF PASTORAL RENEWAL AND FAMILY MINISTRY, ARCHDIOCESE OF ARMAGH

The primary focus of this working group is to have a family ministry co-ordinator in each parish by December 2007. A parish family ministry co-ordinator will be best supported where there is a parish pastoral council in place. We have developed a strategic plan in order to work towards our target.

As part of the process of implementing the plan we have:

- Created a role description for family ministry co-ordinators;
- Sent a questionnaire to the parish priests in conjunction with the team working on the formation of parish pastoral councils (PALS) by way of establishing present practice with regards to family ministry in the diocese;
- Created an outline of the co-ordinators' training programme;
- Made plans in conjunction with PALS and Youth ministry to promote family ministry co-ordinators among the priests of the diocese;

- Made plans to hold twelve family prayer evenings in churches throughout the diocese during Lent in which family spirituality and family ministry is highlighted;
- Invited people to pray for the success of the project;
- Decided to approach parishes that have parish pastoral councils in place to invite them to support the formation of a family ministry co-ordinator for their parish.

We also co-ordinate *Soil for the Seed: Exploring our Faith as Adults* which begins in Dundalk and Cookstown in September 2006. Adults of all ages are welcome. For more information, go to www.parishandfamily.ie.

DEVELOPING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH WORKING GROUP

CHAIR: KATE ACTON, ARMAGH DIOCESAN YOUTH DIRECTOR

The involvement and ministry of women in the future of our Church was repeatedly highlighted through the consultation process.

As the working group addresses the involvement and ministry of women we are bearing in mind:

- a) the objectives identified through the consultation;
- b) the teaching and practise of our Church around these issues;
- c) the experience of women in our parishes.

Knowing that through baptism we are all initiated into the Church, the working group accepts the importance of recognising and enabling all members of our parish community. However, the identified objective leave us accountable for developing the role and ministry of women in the Church.

In addition to drawing up a mission statement for the working group we are currently identifying practical ways of recruiting and involving women in our parishes.

OUTREACH, ECUMENISM AND INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE WORKING GROUP

CHAIR: CANON JIM CARROLL PP,
DROGHEDA

In an endeavour to engage with the task, this working group first met in June 2005. It was acknowledged that much good work is already being done at local level in our diocese in this context of ecumenism and outreach. To build on this, and progress the work a bit further, we opted for facilitation from OPRFM for follow-up meetings.



The vision of the group centres on 7 areas:

- Information to people of what is available;
- Space/Groups for Dialogue and Witness;
- Liturgies for people on the margins;
- A welcoming and inclusive Church;
- Social Action together;
- Praying and Celebrating together;
- Guidelines for best practice.

Group members currently participate in Inter-Church forums, the Inter-Church committee on

Social Issues, the Churches' Asylum Network and Pastoral Care of Immigrants.

Immediate activities:

- Publicise our Vision;
- Research on Inter Church dialogue and co-operation;
- Collating information re ecumenism and outreach.

CARE FOR PRIESTS WORKING GROUP

CHAIR: REV. JOE MCKEEVER CC,
CROSSMAGLEN

The Care for priests working group invited priests to meet together in their local areas (vicariates) to reflect on the whole area of care for priests and each vicariate was asked to suggest three specific priority issues the new group will address initially.

The quality of the reports reflected a sincere and comprehensive consideration of the whole area of care for priests. The exercise seems to have been valued as evidenced in the honesty, openness and at times frankness of views expressed. The collective wisdom underpinning the returns could shape/guide the working group for several years duration. The priority areas identified were:

- Clerical appointments/changes;
- Rationalisation of Masses in parishes and within vicariates; clustering as a mechanism to achieve this;
- Health needs of priests, retired and active;
- Spiritual direction and counselling needs of priests (both ongoing and crisis counselling e.g. post-trauma "situations");
- Fostering of priestly fraternity;
- Special provision for priests, retired and active, who need facilities/support during convalescence.

FAITH FORMATION WORKING GROUP

CHAIR: REV. TOM HAMILL, CHOKMAH,
DUNDALK

THE CALL TO CREATE DISCIPLE'S-FAITH,
FOR LOVE-IN-ACTION IN THE 21stC,
AS MEMBERS OF A LOCAL CHURCH
THAT SPANS FROM BANN TO BOYNE!

1. Faith must primarily be love-in-action, & only secondarily the learning of formulations & prescriptions!
2. The love to be embodied, is that reflected especially in The Gospel Narratives, which depict Yahweh-in-Jesus healing & freeing all those who are in any way oppressed in body, soul, mind, or spirit!
3. This disciple's-faith is nourished in the members of the local church, by regular bathing in the actual Gospel Narratives (not merely in 'traditional interpretations')! by being inspired through The Disciple's Life Style of other members in the local church! and by deep participation in the great rituals of Nurture & Oneness & Healing!
4. As never before, technology is enabling The Other Gods to ensure the widest possible dissemination of their specific mindsets & life-patterns to everyone in the local church, both old & young, of whatever professed ministry! The role-models & rituals of The Other Gods are many & varied, & by contrast with the role-models & rituals of Yahweh-in-Jesus, those of The Other Gods are profuse & ubiquitous!
5. We need to see that some apparently neutral activities are actually significant rituals of The Other Gods! & These are but the beginning of a bittersweet realisation, that much, if not most, of what engages us, is saturated in 'The Faith-of-The Other Gods'!
6. What are the implications for The Creating & Deepening of Disciple's-Faith in The Contemporary World?

* It must be asked continually, where are The Inspirational Disciples who are Embodying-Love-in-Action? & Where are The Nurturing-Rituals, in which disciples can imbibe The Holy Spirit?

* Parents & Priests & Teachers must be constantly encouraged & enabled to be excellent Role Models of The Healing Jesus, for all those entrusted to their loving care!

* Clear Statements-of-Aim (rooted in The Archbishop's Motto) must be generated, for the local church, parishes, schools, clubs, neighbourhoods, families, & individuals...

* Corresponding to these Aims should be Action & Process that resonate with them! & That in their own turn, are tested by them!

PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY WORKING GROUP

SECRETARY: REV DECLAN O'LOUGHLIN,
MULLAGHBAWN

The prayer and spirituality working group meet on the last Tuesday of each month.

Our activities to date include:

- Parish survey of present available prayer/spirituality locally available;
- Week of guided prayer;
- Retreats for ministers of the Word and Eucharist;
- Prayer for young adults;
- Meeting with Dromore Guided Prayer Group.

Our planned activities for the future include:

- Journaling and prayer workshop;
- Series of lectures and experiences of prayer in a pilot area;
- Christian meditation five weekly sessions;
- Lenten retreats for ministers of the Word and Eucharist;
- Diocesan spirituality resource.

MEANINGFUL LITURGY WORKING GROUP CHAIR: REV PETER MCENENLY CC, DUNGANNON

The meaningful liturgy group has already been involved in a number of initiatives.

Last year, a resource booklet on marriage was compiled and published. The booklet, which contains guidelines for the celebration of marriage, has proved to be very useful at parish level. The group is now compiling a similar resource booklet for the celebration of funerals and it too contains very useful ideas and resources. It is hoped that it will be published shortly after Easter and it is expected that it too will be well used throughout the diocese.

The group has recently organised training for ministers of the Word. Given the important ministry that it is, it was felt that there was a need to offer training for those who work with ministers of the Word at parish level. The first of these training sessions took place in Armagh in late March and it is hoped to extend it further to other parts of the diocese.

The possibility of seeking a full time director of music has been discussed.

Another area the group is seeking to develop at present is the whole area of the non national community. How do we engage these people all the more in the life and mission of the Church? The group hopes to develop new strategies for trying to draw non nationals all the more into our liturgies or looking at alternatives ways of making liturgy more meaningful for them.

We hope to continue to look at the whole question of Parish Liturgy Groups and developing training for such groups.

ARMAGH DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN 2005 - 2007



WORKING GROUPS
UPDATE
EASTER 2006