

Gracious God,  
Your Spirit has always been present to the  
Church as it adapted to changing pastoral  
needs and circumstances.

We ask you to send your Spirit upon the  
people of our diocese as we journey through  
this time of transition.

Give us a spirit of openness that we might  
follow where you are leading.  
Give us a spirit of courage that we might take  
the steps you invite us to take.

Give us a spirit of charity that we might  
journey together in mutual love and respect.

May the lives of our patrons, St Patrick,  
St Bridget, St Malachy and St Oliver  
inspire us to live as the Lord's disciples.  
May we respond to the call of our baptism to  
use our gifts in service of each other and of  
our world.

May the ministry of our priests call us to hear  
your word and to spread your word.

May the ministry of our bishops call us to  
unity and to the full knowledge of your Son.

May all of us live as faithful disciples.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The process of clustering, reviewing resources  
and developing new parish structures and  
ministries is being coordinated by Fr. Andrew  
McNally and Dr. Tony Hanna of the Office of  
Pastoral Renewal and Family Ministry.



OFFICE OF PASTORAL RENEWAL  
AND FAMILY MINISTRY  
ARCHDIOCESE OF ARMAGH

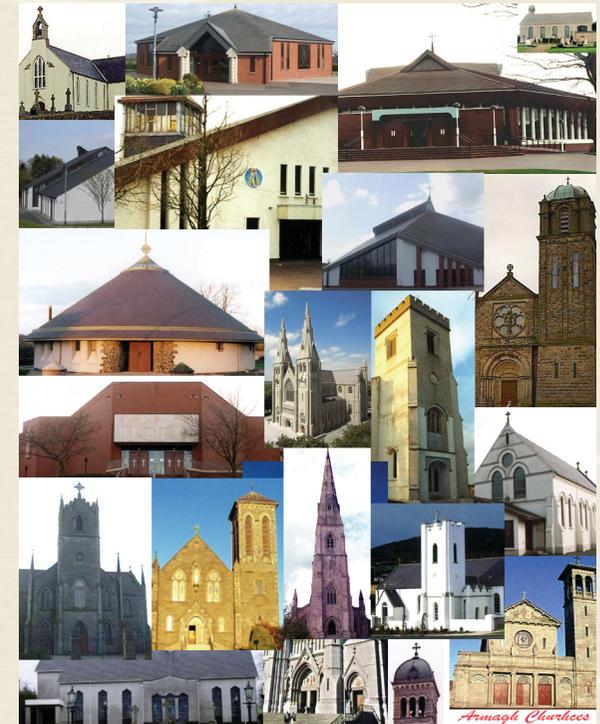
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## DIOCESE IN TRANSITION



## PARISHES IN PARTNERSHIP

The Archdiocese of Armagh has begun a process of adaptation in a time of change. The process has three stages.

### **Stage I: Clustering**

Between November 2008 and June 2009 the parishes of the diocese will be organised into clusters for the purpose of sharing resources. Each parish will retain its own identity. Parishioners will have an opportunity to express their thoughts on which parishes their parish should cluster with.

### **Stage II: Clusters in partnership**

Between September 2009 and June 2010 the parishes in each cluster will work together on sharing resources, exploring such questions as:

- how many priests are to serve in each parish in the cluster;
- what resources are to be allocated to the employment of lay leaders in the cluster;
- the number of Masses to be celebrated at the weekend and on weekdays in each Church in the cluster.

### **Stage III: New parish ministries and structures**

Beginning in September 2010 new opportunities for ministry and new structures will be developed that will enable the parishes and clusters to effectively continue to carry on the mission of Christ in the 21st century.

### **Why are we taking these steps at this time?**

Prompted by the Holy Spirit the Church in every age has adapted in order to meet the pastoral needs in changing circumstances. It does this so that in each generation it can effectively continue Christ's mission of revealing God's compassionate love for all.

The most visible change we have witnessed over the last few decades has been the decline in the number of priests in active ministry in the diocese.

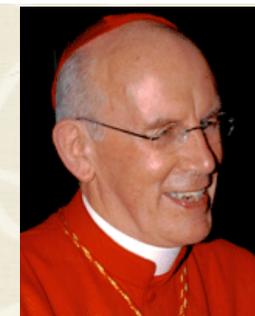
We are also witnessing declining numbers at Sunday Mass. Renewal of faith is a complex issue that needs to be addressed continually and urgently.

Thirdly, there is a growing awareness that because of our baptism we all share in the mission of Christ. There has been a shift in emphasis from "that's the priest's job" to "together we share in the mission of Christ."

In this the Spirit of Christ is at work. We must adapt to the changing numbers of clergy and we must foster the development of lay ministry so that we can continue the renewal of faith in our time.

At the heart of each Christian community is the celebration of the Eucharist. Central to the transitions we make will be the important task of ensuring that the Sunday Eucharist is fittingly celebrated in each parish of the diocese each Sunday.

Finally, while each parish will retain its own identity, the hope is that the clusters will work together creatively in partnership for the sake of the reign of God.



*Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,*

*God, our Father, gives us gifts of grace, for every time and season, to guide the Church in the marvellous ways of providence. Jesus Christ has ascended above all the Heavens and poured into the hearts of faithful people the Holy Spirit.*

*I ask you to turn to that same Holy Spirit now in frequent and fervent prayer that the Church of Armagh may be guided aright in this time of transition.*

*Pentecost was a day of great change, but also a time of new life and growth. May this time be a New Pentecost for all of us. May Mary, Seat of Wisdom, guide us and may the Saints of our diocese encourage us along the way.*

*Yours in Christ,*

*+ Sean Card. Brady*  
**+Sean Cardinal Brady**