

It is almost two years now since Pope Benedict announced that the 50th International Eucharistic Congress would be hosted in Ireland in 2012. People may be interested to know what has happened since. The planning committee established by Archbishop Martin has been working on a number of different fronts, making both logistical and pastoral preparations for the Congress.

The gospels tell us how, shortly before the Last Supper, Jesus gave fairly detailed instructions to his disciples about the preparation of the room for the Passover. We too have been making preparations of that kind and the committee has recently confirmed that the main events of the Congress will take place at the RDS and Croke Park. We hope that events associated with the Congress will also take place in each diocese throughout the country.

Most people will recognise, of course, that the Last Supper was a particular moment of Communion between Jesus and his disciples, in a faith journey which had begun three or four years previously and which continued for the rest of their lives. In much the same way, the events of the Congress are part of a journey of faith which has already begun.

This is where the pastoral preparation comes in. The Congress committee is preparing a range of pastoral and catechetical materials which we hope will help us over the next two years to renew our communion with Him and with one another. The first taster of these materials will be ready by May of this year and will, hopefully, help people to prepare for the celebration of Corpus Christi.

We are very conscious of the fact that very many people in Ireland at the present time are discouraged and disillusioned both by the economic crisis and by the failures and sins of the Church. This is the background against which we have to prepare the Congress and it cannot be ignored. There were moments like this in the faith journey of the first disciples too. It was in circumstances just like this, that Jesus came to meet the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, as they were running away from Jerusalem after the Crucifixion. He listened to their concerns, explained to word of God to them, and broke bread with them. Caravaggio captures that scene most beautifully in his Supper at Emmaus, which can be seen on:
<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/michelangelo-merisi-da-caravaggio-the-supper-at-emmaus>

In addition to the staff of three people at the Congress office, there are already well over a hundred people actively engaged on a voluntary basis in the preparation of the Eucharistic Congress. Many more have offered their help as volunteers in the coming years. We want to invite the participation of every person in Ireland who shares our faith in Jesus. There is one practical way in which you can help. We are currently preparing a selection of short reflections, prayers, poetry and literature relating to the Eucharist, communion and community. We are looking for your suggestions. These resources will be compiled into a booklet and / or on-line resource which will be made available later this year. Send your suggestions to Eucharistic Congress Office, Holy Cross Diocesan Centre, Dublin 3, or by email to info@iec2012.ie.

You can also support the Congress by logging in to our web-site at www.iec2012.ie and sharing with others in your parish the information that you find there. Over the next few months, we will be putting new materials on the site and it is here also that you will find in due course all that practical information which will enable you to participate in the Congress.