



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 to lead us and guide us 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 Brigid, 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 willing and faithful disciples.

Amen



OFFICE OF PASTORAL RENEWAL
AND FAMILY MINISTRY
ARCHDIOCESE OF ARMAGH

The strengthening parishes initiative is being coordinated by Fr. Andrew McNally and Dr. Tony Hanna of the Office of Pastoral Renewal and Family Ministry.

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SPIRITFEST 2011

Friday 1st - Sunday 3rd July

The Archdiocese of Armagh invites you join in a three-day diocesan gathering focusing on the theme of prayer. The purpose of the gathering is to encourage people, prompted by the Spirit, to deepen their relationship with Christ through prayer by providing them with insights into the deep Christian tradition of prayer and by offering them experiences of prayer in its different forms.

The three day event, to be held in Armagh, will include prayer experiences, keynote addresses and workshops. Friday 1st July will include a unique youth focus.



ARCHDIOCESE OF ARMAGH

PASTORAL AREAS UPDATE



Strengthening Parishes
for the 21st Century

Lent 2010



Cardinal Brady formally adopted the eighteen new pastoral areas in July 2010. Just as in winter growth is difficult to see until the appearance of the snowdrops it has been difficult to see progress with regard to the pastoral areas. However, as with the snowdrops, the steady work over the winter with the development of the pastoral areas is beginning to bear fruit.

Priest leaders for the pastoral areas

A first step in selecting leaders has already been taken. Each pastoral area now has a priest leader who, in keeping with Church law, is called a vicar forane (VF). The eighteen vicars were appointed following a poll of all the priests of the diocese in which they were asked to say who they thought should be the priest leader in each of the pastoral areas. In other words, the eighteen were chosen by their peers. They are: A – Fr Gates, B – Fr Tremer, C – Fr O’Neill, D – Fr Hannigan, E – Fr Fee, F – Dean Curry, G – Fr O’Dwyer, H – Fr Sweeney, I – Fr Cullen, J – Fr Naughton, K – Fr Maloney, L – Fr McParland, M – Fr Campbell, N – Fr Conlon, O – Fr McEnroe, P – Fr Murphy, Q – Fr Clayton-Lea, R – Canon J Carroll. For a map of the pastoral area see: <http://www.parishandfamily.ie/images/docs/newpastoralareas.pdf>

Since their appointment the VF’s have met together on three occasions to explore how best to develop the pastoral areas. They have also consulted with the priests and pastoral councils in their pastoral areas. As a result they have formed a description of the function of the pastoral area, decided to create a pastoral area resource team in each pastoral area and explored the question of lay leadership in the pastoral area.

Function of the pastoral area

Here is a description of the function of the pastoral area:

A pastoral area is a cluster of neighbouring parishes that support each other and share the collaborative gifts and talents of each parish. With the help of the Holy Spirit, they do this in order to fulfill the mission of the Church to proclaim the word of God and further the mission of Christ in the world.

Pastoral area resource team

The pastoral area resource team consists of five people from each of the parishes in the pastoral area. Under the leadership of the Vicar forane the pastoral area resource team will help to strengthen each of the parishes in the pastoral areas by:

- 1. ensuring the effective sharing of the collective gifts and talents of the parishes in the pastoral area*
- 2. identifying pastoral matters that can be done better together as a pastoral area than separately as individual parishes.*

Lay leaders for the pastoral areas

The responsibility of leading the work of the pastoral area resource team lies with the Vicar forane working closely with a lay leader or lay leaders. It will be their task to coordinate the ongoing activities of the pastoral area resource team between meetings. In the main, it will fall to the lay leader or leaders to carry out this activity or to ensure that it is carried out.

In some pastoral areas a volunteer lay coordinator will be appointed from among the members of the pastoral area resource team to be co-responsible with the Vicar forane for the work of the pastoral area resource team.

In other pastoral areas leadership will be an act of co-responsibility between the vicar forane and a leadership team consisting of the Vicar forane and one lay member of the pastoral area resource team from each parish.

Next steps

Three formation sessions have been planned for the members of the pastoral area resource teams throughout the diocese, to be completed by May 2010. After that the pastoral area resource teams will choose their lay leaders.

Other developments

Alongside the formation of the pastoral areas there have been two other significant developments.

The diocesan aim

There are many initiatives taking place in our diocese. Apart from the formation of the pastoral area much valuable work has been carried out in the area of safeguarding children, adult religious education and prayer initiatives, to name but a few. The question arises of what is the overall purpose of the diocese, what are we trying to achieve? In recent times Cardinal Brady approved the following as the aim of the archdiocese of Armagh:

ARCHDIOCESE OF ARMAGH

As a diocese,

we aim to become the Body of Christ

with the help of the Holy Spirit

so that we can live like Jesus in our time and place

sharing his compassionate love with all.

A new Diocesan Pastoral Council

In order to meet the challenges of changing realities a new Diocesan Pastoral Council is being formed with a new constitution and new commissions. These will replace the previous Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Coordinating Group of the Pastoral Plan. The new commissions include:

- Mission and Ecumenism Commission
- Prayer and Spirituality Commission
- Youth Commission
- Justice, Peace and Development Commission
- Christian Vocation Commission
- Faith Formation and Training Commission
- Liturgy Commission
- Care for Priests Commission.

All are invited to St Patrick’s Cathedral on Tuesday 8 June 2010 at 7.30pm for the official promulgation of the constitution of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the adoption of the diocesan aim and the commissioning of the pastoral area resource teams. The inaugural meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council will be held on Saturday 9 October 2010.

Upcoming dates

March - May 2010: training of the pastoral area resource teams

8 June 2010: Ceremony of promulgation

9 October 2010: Diocesan Pastoral Council inaugural meeting