



# SHARE THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

## — Mission & Outreach —

Visitation, Disadvantaged, Addiction, Family, Vocation

## — Spirit-Filled Worship —

Word, Singing, Prayer, Youth, Touching the Sacred

## — Understanding Our Faith —

Baptism, Study, Bible, Theology, Catechesis

Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2015 -2020



If you would like to comment on any part of the proposed plan or would like further information, please contact the Office of Pastoral Renewal and Family Ministry at:

The Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Centre  
The Magnet, Dundalk

Tel: 00353 42 9336649  
Email: [parishandfamily@gmail.com](mailto:parishandfamily@gmail.com)



This Diocesan Pastoral Plan is the fruit of eighteen months of consultation and refinement with Parish Pastoral Councils, Pastoral Area Resource Teams, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and its Executive and Commissions, the Clergy Conference and the Council of Priests, and many other diocesan agencies.

It does not include everything, merely three important areas for special pastoral attention. It offers five objectives in each area, which will guide us in our pastoral ministry for the next five years. Key to its implementation will be its ability to inform local decisions in parishes, particularly by our Parish Pastoral Councils.

I therefore ask each Parish Pastoral Council to select each year, one objective from each of the three areas, and to make a concerted effort to find new and creative ways to address those objectives, as are appropriate for your local parish situation. Where neighbouring parishes in a Pastoral Area choose the same objectives, it might well be beneficial to liaise with your Resource Team or to combine forces; this will be a discussion for your PARTs.

A good plan must be monitored and evaluated, so I am asking the Office of Pastoral Renewal and Family Ministry to collate what parishes are working on, and to coordinate support for parishes and Pastoral Areas in making these objectives a reality.

+Eamon  
Archbishop of Armagh



## **“With Christ joy is constantly born anew”**

Pope Francis

After consulting widely, three main areas of activity have been identified as areas for particular pastoral attention: Mission & Outreach, Spirit-Filled Worship, and Understanding our Faith. In each of these areas, five key activities have been selected. The areas and objectives are listed in detail later, and are here in short summary.

<b>A.</b> <b>MISSION &amp; OUTREACH</b>	A1. Visitation
	A2. Disadvantaged
	A3. Addiction
	A4. Family
	A5. Vocation
<b>B.</b> <b>SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP</b>	B1. Singing
	B2. The Word
	B3. Touching the Sacred
	B4. Prayer
	B5. Youth
<b>C.</b> <b>UNDERSTANDING OUR FAITH</b>	C1. Catechesis
	C2. Theology
	C3. Study
	C4. Bible
	C5. Baptism

Some, like C1 (the diocese to have a comprehensive plan for catechesis) will be arranged primarily at diocesan level. C2 (formal accredited theology courses) are already organised via the OPRFM. Most, however, can only be effective when given attention locally in parishes, or by parishes working jointly within their Pastoral Area.

## AREA A

# Mission & Outreach

Visitation, Disadvantaged, Addiction, Family, Vocation

The Church exists to evangelize. In *The Joy of the Gospel* (2013), Pope Francis reminds us that everything we do as church can be done “in a missionary key.” Our five objectives in the area of Mission and Outreach encourage parishes and other diocesan agencies to re-evaluate current activities in light of Pope Francis' call, and challenge us to target our attention as Jesus did, on the marginalised in society.

### A1. Visitation

Many parishes have visitation teams who make contact with newcomers to our communities. All parishes can assess whether or not we consciously cultivate a genuine culture of welcome and hospitality for all. Pope Francis reminds us that we are the “Church living in midst of the homes of her sons and daughters,” and he cautions parishes not to “become useless structures, out of touch with people, or a self absorbed cluster of the chosen few” (EG, 28).

### A2. Disadvantaged

Mother Teresa always answered the 'Why?' question by replying: “Five little words: You did it for me.” She was quoting Matthew 25:40 “In so far as you did this for one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it for me.” This diocesan objective calls us to keep ourselves attuned to new realities of disadvantage in our midst, often hidden, and frequently compounded when multiple forms of disadvantage overlap.

### **A3.     Addiction**

Addiction keeps emerging as the most pressing social challenge facing our communities. Parishes and other diocesan agencies can play a key role in providing training and raising awareness. As this objective requires particular expertise, our task will be to cooperate with the relevant professional bodies that provide the necessary services; we can support the existing drop-in centres to help recovering addicts, and we can gather for periodic healing Masses and themed prayer services throughout the diocese.

### **A4.     Family**

We will support and promote the recommendations of The Ordinary General Synod on Marriage and the Family 2015. While Marriage remains the “primordial sacrament, belonging to creation itself” (Pope St John XXIII), which mirrors the mystery of God's love for humans and of Christ's love for his Church, we also echo Pope Francis' statement that “there is no such thing as a perfect marriage/family.” The objective of parish groups and other diocesan agencies must be to always support Christian marriage as the basis of family life, but to find courageous and innovative models of pastoral outreach to all families so that everyone can experience the Father's mercy.

### **A5.     Vocation - Christian Discipleship**

In Baptism we all become 'living stones' to be built into a spiritual house, to share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission (cf Catechism, 1267). We will develop programmes (such as *Called & Gifted*) and training that help all People of God to discover and live out their Baptismal call, and we will make a special effort to promote vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life.

## AREA B

### — Spirit-Filled Worship — Word, Singing, Prayer, Youth, Touching the Sacred

When we gather in worship, the Father pours into our hearts the gift that contains all gifts, the Holy Spirit, who helps us enter into personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and with God as Father. In our liturgies, we express in our lives the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. In this plan we focus on five aspects that can enhance our worship and deepen our prayer lives. “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters” Isaiah 55:1.

#### **B1. Singing**

“Sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs among yourselves, singing and chanting to the Lord in your hearts, always giving praise to God” (Ephesians 5:19). Many of our parishes are blessed with excellent choirs and cantors. We strive for beauty and dignity in the liturgy together with the key liturgical objective of congregational participation.

#### **B2. The Word**

When the disciples recognised Jesus at the breaking of bread at Emmaus, they asked: “Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us” (Luke 24:32). We intend to help all our Ministers of the Word, priests, deacons and parish communities, to ensure that the Word is effectively proclaimed and fruitfully broken open in our public worship.



### **B3. Touching the Sacred**

The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian faith. There are other ways of “touching the sacred” which can be encouraged and explored. Many parishes have regular Eucharistic Adoration; some have formed teams of laity trained to lead weekday liturgies in the absence of an ordained minister, and this is likely to become more commonplace over time. Praying with icons, devotional prayers, pilgrimages, etc. all need to be supported and encouraged.

### **B4. Prayer**

Nothing in this plan can succeed without prayer. We wish to promote a ministry of prayer and adoration throughout our diocese, and to channel it as an Apostolate of Intercession for this pastoral plan, and for our Church in the world.

### **B5. Youth**

At every level in our diocese, we wish to be on the lookout for new opportunities to engage and involve younger people in the faith life of our Church, especially when we gather to worship.

## — Understanding Our Faith —

Baptism, Study, Bible, Theology, Catechesis

Catechesis, or understanding our faith, is central to the life and mission of our church. It supports the proclamation of our faith and offers instruction and formation in faith, helping to bring members of the Christian community to maturity in that faith. The five objectives in this area are as follows:

### **C1. Catechesis**

Within the next five years, our diocese will develop and implement a comprehensive plan for catechesis / faith development, as outlined in the National Directory for Catechesis, *Share the Good News* (2010).

### **C2. Theology**

Formal Theology courses have been organised by the Office of Pastoral Renewal & Family Ministry (OPRFM) for the past six years. The *Certificate in Theology, Adult Education and Pastoral Ministry* (2015-17) begins in September and is accredited by the Pontifical University, St Patrick's College, Maynooth. It opens opportunities to continue to Diploma and Degree level, and helps to prepare laity for significant leadership positions in our parishes.

### **C3. Study**

Not everyone can commit to a number of years of formal study, so the diocese will continue to offer shorter-term, 'bite-sized' courses in theological study, along the model of the previous *Soil for the Seed* programmes. The Adult Faith Formation Commission also has a particular role in this objective, and will continue to offer short programmes such as the *Catholicism* series.

#### **C4. Bible**

"The sacred page is the very soul of theology" (*Dei Verbum*). This plan aims to have *Lectio Divina* available in every Pastoral Area by 2020. Programmes like the *Bible Timeline* will be offered, and assistance given to groups who wish to set up Bible study classes, *Lectio* prayer groups, etc.

#### **C5. Baptism**

"Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments" (Catechism, 1213). Appropriate preparation is vital for the proper understanding and celebration of Baptism, so we strongly encourage each parish to have a pre-Baptism team to meet with parents and godparents. Appropriate formation and training will be provided for these teams. The RCIA Programme, which prepares candidates for adult Baptism, will also be made more widely available throughout the diocese.

# Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2015 - 2020

Area	Objectives	Objectives
<b>A</b> <b>Mission &amp; Outreach</b>	<b>(A1)</b> We will promote a culture of parish visitation and a culture of welcome and hospitality for all.	<b>(A2)</b> We will support initiatives for the homeless and disadvantaged.
<b>B</b> <b>Spirit-Filled Worship</b>	<b>(B1)</b> We will promote beauty and dignity in liturgy and sacred music with regular congregational singing.	<b>(B2.i)</b> We will provide a diocesan training programme for Ministers of the Word.  <b>(B2.ii)</b> We will support our Priests and Deacons in preaching the Word.
<b>C</b> <b>Understanding Our Faith</b>	<b>(C1)</b> Guided by the National Directory, <i>Share the Good News</i> , we will have a comprehensive, coherent plan for catechesis/faith development.	<b>(C2)</b> We will provide formal theology courses at Certificate, Diploma and Degree level.

**Objectives**

**(A3)**

**We will raise awareness about addiction, reach out in co-operation with professional bodies and promote prayers and liturgies for healing.**

**Objectives**

**(A4)**

**We will implement the recommendations from the Synod on the Family, 2015.**

**Objectives**

**(A5)**

**We will develop programmes and training that help all Catholics discover and live out the call of Baptism.**

**(B3)**

**We will encourage different ways of touching the sacred through a range of devotions both traditional and innovative.**

**(B4)**

**We will encourage a ministry of Prayer and Adoration across the diocese to intercede for the intentions of the Church and the World.**

**(B5)**

**We will seek new ways to engage and involve young people in our worship.**

**(C3)**

**We will continue to provide informal theology programmes at regional level, and support short catechetical opportunities at local level.**

**(C4)**

**Praying with God's Word, (*Lectio Divina* / Bible Study) will be developed across the diocese.**

**(C5)**

**Formal pre-baptismal preparation will be standard practice, and RCIA will be readily available across the diocese.**





Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Trinity of love,  
Guide the plans and actions of Your Church  
in the Archdiocese of Armagh.

At this time You are calling us to a deeper  
understanding of our faith;

You are inviting us to worship you in a  
prayerful Spirit-filled manner;

You commission us to be courageous  
witnesses to the Joy of the Gospel.

Pour out Your Spirit on us.

Rekindle in us the fire of Your love.

Give us courage to reach out in service to  
others, accompanying them with Your  
mercy, so that everyone can share the joy  
of a personal encounter with You.

Saints of Armagh:

St. Patrick, St. Brigid, St. Malachy  
and St. Oliver Plunkett, walk with us  
on our pilgrim way.

Naomh Muire, Máthair Dé, Guí orainn.

Amen.

