

ARMAGH DIOCESAN CONGRESS REPORT



June 2026



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1. INTRODUCTION



The Diocesan Congress on Youth, Family and Faith, which took place from the 20th to the 22nd of March, 2026, marked a unique and important occasion in the life of the Archdiocese of Armagh. It brought together over 300 representatives from parishes, schools, families and communities and as such was more than just an event in the diocesan calendar – it was a moment of encounter and shared discernment. It offered people from across the diocese an opportunity to listen and

pray together and consider with honesty and hope how the Church is being called to renew its mission at this time and in this place.

The work of the Congress depended on the preparation that had taken place in the years and months preceding it. Through local synodal conversations and prayerful reflection many voices were heard including young people, families, clergy, teachers, parishioners and those engaged in service and ministry. Their contributions provided a comprehensive picture of the realities facing faith communities today, including the challenges of belonging, participation, formation, prayer, communication and outreach in a Church context. They also revealed a deep reservoir of faith, generosity and desire for renewal across the diocese.

The Congress, and the preparation for it, modelled a synodal way of being Church. It was attentive to the Holy Spirit, rooted in prayer, open to honest dialogue and committed to shared responsibility for mission. The feedback from the consultations along with the liturgies, testimonies, table conversations and speakers over the weekend all contributed to a wider process of discernment. The process generated material that will be immensely beneficial for sustained reflection and action in the years ahead.

This report seeks to gather and interpret the fruits of that process. It records the preparation, the spiritual atmosphere of the Congress, the insights offered by speakers and delegates, the recommendations made and the initial pathways identified for implementation. It also points to deeper themes emerging from the whole experience, namely the need for belonging, the renewal of prayer in the home and parish, the formation of clergy and lay people, the inclusion of those on the margins, and the development of more coherent diocesan structures to support and communicate the mission.

The Congress itself was not the end of a journey but simply the beginning. It has provided the diocese with a significant direction and foundation for future planning and pastoral renewal. The task now is to receive it's fruits with an openness to the continued work of discernment and to translate it's hopes into concrete steps that will help build living, faith-filled communities across the Archdiocese of Armagh.

2. PREPARATION FOR THE CONGRESS

The Diocesan Congress on Youth, Family and Faith (20 - 22 March 2026) did not emerge in isolation. It grew out of the wider synodal journey undertaken across the Archdiocese of Armagh since 2021, and from a sustained period of listening, reflection and discernment involving parishes, schools, families, young people, clergy and lay leaders. Through local gatherings, consultations and diocesan conversations, space was created for honest sharing about the realities of faith today, naming both the challenges facing parish life and the hopes people continue to hold for the future of the Church.

Across these years of listening, several themes emerged consistently such as belonging, participation, faith formation, prayer in the home, youth and family ministry, parish-school-family partnership, welcome, co-responsibility and the need for more sustainable structures for mission. These themes reflected not abstract ideas, but the lived faith and experience of people across the diocese, expressing a growing desire for deeper connection, meaningful participation and shared responsibility for the Church's mission.

The Congress became the focal point for bringing these insights into a year-long process of prayerful discernment. In advance of the gathering, delegates were supported through preparatory materials, including short audio reflections designed to encourage attentive and prayerful engagement. Participants were invited to reflect deeply on what resonated, what challenged, and where the Holy Spirit might be calling the local Church at this time. From this process, six key pastoral priorities emerged, each accompanied by practical proposals for action and renewal.

At the same time, the Congress tested these priorities against the lived reality of the archdiocese: declining practice, changing patterns of family life, increasing pressure on clergy and volunteers, the influence of digital culture, social fragmentation and the need for renewed missionary confidence. In doing so, it marked a significant transition in diocesan life, moving the conversation from broad synodal synthesis towards concrete pastoral priorities and practical implementation.

The Congress also revealed that genuine renewal will require more than events or programmes. It will depend upon ongoing formation, leadership development, functioning councils and committees, accountability, communication, resourcing and a shared responsibility across the whole diocesan community. For this reason, the Congress should not be seen as the conclusion of a process, but as a threshold moment for the Archdiocese of Armagh: a movement from listening to implementation, from consultation to reception, and from aspiration to the real and practical work of pastoral conversion.



3. OUTLINE OF THE CONGRESS PROCESS

The Congress itself was not simply a gathering to discuss proposals, but an intentional expression of the kind of Church we are seeking to become. The weekend was carefully structured as a spiritual and synodal process, grounded in prayer and attentive listening. The opening liturgy on Friday evening brought together the gifts and talents of young people and families from across the Archdiocese, offering a visible and joyful expression of participation, creativity and faith in action.

Saturday began in prayer, setting the tone for the work that followed. Throughout the day, delegates were invited to deepen and broaden their reflection before making recommendations. This included inputs and a panel conversation which offered additional perspectives to inform discernment. The primary focus of the day, however, was the careful consideration of the nineteen proposals emerging from the six priorities.

Working at table groups, delegates engaged with each proposal and were asked to indicate one of three responses: to recommend the proposal as presented, to recommend it with amendments, or to indicate that it could not be recommended at this time. This process allowed for both affirmation and refinement, ensuring that the voice of the assembly was clearly expressed.

Following the conclusion of Saturday's work, the results were collated and prepared overnight. On Sunday, these findings were presented back to delegates, providing clarity on the level of support for each proposal. The focus then shifted from discernment to initial pathways for implementation. Delegates were invited to consider the most strongly supported proposals and to reflect on what concrete steps would be required to bring them to life, identifying practical actions, responsibilities and next steps.

The Congress concluded with Evening Prayer and Benediction in St Malachy's Church, Armagh, where those gathered offered the fruits of the weekend in prayer and thanksgiving. This moment represented not just an ending, but a turning point and a movement from listening and discernment into a renewed commitment to act, to serve in mission, and to continue the process of building living, faith-filled communities that accompany young people and families across the Archdiocese of Armagh.



4. OPENING CEREMONY AND LITURGIES

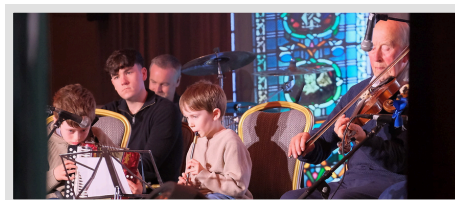
The Opening Liturgy: Setting the Spiritual Tone



The opening liturgy of the Congress on Youth, Family and Faith was not simply a time for gathering but was a foundational moment for the entire experience of the weekend. From the outset, it was clear that this Congress would be rooted in prayer, shaped by the Spirit, and attentive to the living faith of the people of God in the Archdiocese of Armagh.

The Opening Liturgy created a powerful and prayerful space that held together the richness of tradition with the vibrancy of the present moment. Intergenerational in its participation and deeply reflective of the gifts present across the Archdiocese, it was widely experienced as inspiring, inclusive, and spiritually uplifting. Delegates consistently reflected that the opening liturgy did more than begin the Congress, but set the overall tone for the weekend, creating a space of openness, attentiveness and expectation that carried through into the conversations and discernment of the following days.

This purpose and focus was intentional. Rather than opting for a conventional format, the opening evening integrated liturgical prayer with music, testimony, reflection, and artistic expression. In doing so, it sought not only to gather people, but to model and embody the kind of Church the Archdiocese is seeking to become, one that is participative, prayerful, rooted in tradition, and open to the gifts of all, especially young people, families and those who may feel marginalised in society and in our Church.



4. OPENING CEREMONY AND LITURGIES

A Living Expression of Faith

The structure of the Opening Liturgy reflected this vision. Drawing on scripture, symbol and the lived experience of faith, it brought together voices from across the diocese in a way that was both reverent and dynamic.

From the opening procession and the blessing of the prayer space, to the proclamation of the Word and the integration of music, dance and testimony, the liturgy unfolded as a living expression of faith handed on through generations and lived in the present. The inclusion of choirs, young people, families, and communities from diverse backgrounds highlighted the richness of the Archdiocese and made visible the reality that the Church is truly a people gathered from many places, but united in faith.

Particularly powerful were the moments that connected faith to everyday life: the reflections of young people, the witness of families, the Makaton performance of the community from Oakridge Special Education Centre, and the intergenerational sharing of faith between grandparents and grandchildren. These moments echoed a central theme of the Congress, that faith is most often passed on not through programmes or structures, but through lived experience, relationship and witness.

The Call to “Put Out into the Deep”



At the heart of the Opening Liturgy was the address of Archbishop Eamon Martin, which offered both encouragement and challenge. Drawing on the Gospel of the call of Simon Peter, he invited delegates to hear again the words of Christ: “Put out into the deep... trust me.”

This image resonated deeply with the experience of the Church in Ireland today. Acknowledging the realities of fatigue, discouragement and the many challenges facing faith and practice, Archbishop Eamon spoke honestly of the context in which the Congress was taking place. Yet his message was not one of resignation, but of hope and courage.

He reminded delegates that, like Saint Patrick, the Church is called not to remain in safe or familiar waters, but to step out in trust, guided by the Holy Spirit. Baptism and confirmation, he emphasised, are not simply past events but living realities, calls to mission, to participation and also to individual and collective responsibility for the future of the Church.

This theme of being “baptised, confirmed, and sent” became a key thread throughout the Congress.

4. OPENING CEREMONY AND LITURGIES

Communion with the Universal Church



The reading of the message from Pope Leo XIV further deepened the sense of communion with the wider Church. The Holy Father's words affirmed the importance of the Congress as part of a continuing journey of renewal and mission, encouraging all present to "rekindle the flame of faith" first ignited by Saint Patrick.

His particular emphasis on young people and families resonated strongly with the purpose of the Congress. By inviting young people to discover Christ as a true friend and encouraging the strengthening of the relationship between parish and family life, the message reinforced the central priorities of the weekend.

The Pope's Apostolic Blessing, imparted as a pledge of serenity and renewal, was received as a moment of grace and encouragement, situating the work of the Congress within the life and mission of the universal Church.

Prayer at the Heart of the Congress



The liturgical life of the Congress continued to sustain and deepen the experience of delegates throughout the weekend. The Congress Mass in Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Saturday provided a moment of gathering in the heart of the diocese, rooted in the Eucharist and the tradition of faith handed down through generations.

In his homily, Bishop Michael Router drew on the imagery of Ezekiel's vision of dry bones and the raising of Lazarus to speak to the present moment of the Church in Ireland. While acknowledging the real challenges of declining practice and cultural change, he offered a message of hope grounded in the action of the Holy Spirit, who continues to bring life where there is discouragement and renewal where there is fragility.

By recalling the witness of Saint Oliver Plunkett, Bishop Michael situated the present moment within the wider history of the Church in Armagh, reminding delegates that renewal has often emerged from times of difficulty. His call to courage, missionary zeal, and a renewed focus on belonging echoed strongly with the themes of the Congress and invited participants to see themselves as active contributors to the future of the Church.

4. OPENING CEREMONY AND LITURGIES

A Deepening Spiritual Experience

A particularly significant element of the weekend was the contribution of Brother Jean Marie from the Taizé Community, who led moments of prayer on both Saturday and Sunday. These moments introduced a contemplative and meditative dimension to the Congress, creating space for stillness, reflection and openness to the Spirit.

The Taizé-style prayer, with its simplicity, repetition, and focus on presence, helped to ground the conversations of the Congress in a deeper spiritual awareness. It served as a reminder that discernment is not simply a process of discussion or decision-making, but a listening to the voice of God speaking within and among the gathered community.

These moments of prayer were widely experienced as enriching and formative, enhancing the quality of the conversations and helping delegates to remain attentive to the spiritual dimension of their work.

A Vision Made Real

The closing liturgy in Saint Malachy's Church offered a more simple and reflective moment, bringing the Congress to a prayerful conclusion. The installation of the legacy art piece provided a tangible expression of what had been shared and discerned over the course of the weekend, marking the Congress not as an isolated event but as part of an ongoing journey.

Taken together, the liturgies of the Congress were not simply moments of worship, but integral to the congress and a lived expression of the vision the Archdiocese of Armagh is seeking to realise. They demonstrated a Church that is intergenerational, participative, prayerful and open to the movement of the Spirit.

The integration of music, testimony, symbol, and silence created a space in which faith could be both celebrated and deepened. The active involvement of young people and families made visible the reality that they are not simply the future of the Church, but its present.

Conclusion: Prayer as Foundation

The experience of the opening ceremony and liturgies underscores a key insight of the Congress: that renewal in the Church must be rooted in prayer. The depth of engagement, the quality of conversation, and the openness to discernment witnessed throughout the weekend were all sustained by the prayerful foundation established from the very beginning.

The Opening Liturgy, in particular, is seen as a defining moment of the Congress. It created not only a sense of welcome and unity, but also a shared spiritual horizon that shaped everything that followed. In doing so, it offered a glimpse of what is possible when the Church gathers, not only to speak and plan, but to pray, to listen, and to respond together to the call of the Lord to "put out into the deep."



5. SPEAKERS AND PANEL DISCUSSION

Introduction



On Saturday morning, prior to the formal consideration of proposals, delegates gathered for a focused input from invited speakers, followed by a panel discussion. This moment was intentionally placed within the programme to broaden and deepen the discernment process. In reviewing the diocesan listening and emerging proposals, it became clear that while there was strong engagement across many areas, certain dimensions, particularly the scope of faith formation and the Church's mission in service, required further expansion and depth.

The invited contributions were therefore designed to stretch the horizon of the Congress: to ground reflection in lived experience, to bring voices from the margins into the centre of discernment, and to challenge delegates to think more ambitiously about what it means to be a synodal Church today. These inputs helped frame the subsequent table discussions, where delegates were asked to engage critically and constructively with the proposals before making recommendations to the Archbishop.

Caroline Currie - *Principal, Rathore Special Needs School, Newry*



Drawing on her experience as Principal of Rathore School, Caroline Currie offered a deeply grounded reflection on inclusion, belonging, and faith, particularly in the lives of children and young people with additional needs and their families.

She began by outlining the context of Rathore School, which serves children with complex learning, behavioural, and medical needs, many of whom are autistic. From this, she highlighted the lived reality of families who must constantly navigate multiple systems, education, healthcare, and social services, often experiencing isolation, exhaustion, and, at times, exclusion.

A central theme of her input was the gap between a Church that desires to welcome and the actual experience of families. While many families are eager to participate in parish life, they often encounter barriers such as:

- A lack of understanding of additional needs
- Sensory and environmental challenges within liturgical settings
- Limited adaptation of sacramental preparation and parish programmes
- Fear of judgement or disruption

She emphasised that small, relational gestures, being welcomed by name, thoughtful adaptations, and genuine openness, can make a profound difference in fostering belonging.

Importantly, Caroline moved beyond challenges to highlight the gifts of young people with additional needs. Their authenticity, presence, and how their joy in worship can deepen the faith of the whole community and expand how the Church understands

5. SPEAKERS AND PANEL DISCUSSION

participation and discipleship. Rather than being seen as recipients of care, they are contributors who reshape parish life.

She concluded with a call for:

- Greater training and awareness for clergy and parish teams
- Flexible and creative approaches to liturgy and sacramental life
- Partnership with families and schools
- And a shift from mere awareness to genuine acceptance of neurodiversity

Her contribution invited the Congress to reimagine belonging, not as accommodation but as a shared transformation of the community.

Fr. Tony O’Riordan - *Jesuit Refugee Service and Member of the Jesuit Community in Portadown*



Fr Tony O’Riordan SJ situated the synodal journey within a much wider global and Gospel context, calling delegates to a deeper and more courageous engagement with the realities of the world.

He began by affirming the significance of the Congress itself as a significant and historic moment, an expression of the Church responding to the call of synodality as a way of “walking together” with God and with one another. However, he challenged the gathering not to settle into comfort, but to remain ambitious in vision and mission.

At the heart of his reflection was a clear insistence that synodality must lead the Church towards the margins. Drawing on both global and local realities, he highlighted:

- The scale of forced displacement, conflict, and global poverty
- The ongoing crises affecting children, including rising mortality rates
- The environmental challenges facing the planet
- The realities of poverty, addiction, mental health, and social division closer to home

These were not presented as abstract issues, but as integral to the Gospel. Echoing the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, particularly *Gaudium et Spes*, he stressed that the joys and sufferings of humanity are inseparable from the mission of the Church.

Fr Tony also shared practical stories from his ministry, illustrating what it means to be Church in action:

- Communities welcoming cultural diversity and becoming enriched by it,
- Schools responding creatively to poverty and trauma,
- Experiences of solidarity that foster belonging, dignity, and transformation.

A key message throughout was that the Church is called not simply to reflect or discuss, but to act, to “disturb what must be disturbed” and to embody the Kingdom of God in concrete ways. He encouraged delegates, especially young people, to resist small or safe visions of Church and instead to “dream big,” moving beyond comfort zones and engaging with the realities of the world.

He concluded by reinforcing that this outward, justice-oriented and compassionate approach is not optional or personal preference but is at the very heart of the Gospel and the Church’s identity.

5. SPEAKERS AND PANEL DISCUSSION

Panel Discussion



A panel discussion followed the input from guest speakers, offering delegates an opportunity to hear a range of perspectives from those engaged in leadership, youth ministry, faith formation, and the synodal process.

The panel, comprising of Archbishop Eamon Martin, Brother Jean Marie of the Taizé Community, Lizzie Rea (Derry Diocese), Colm Sherry (St. Ciaran's, Ballygawley), and Janet Forbes (Archdiocese of Armagh), responded to questions submitted by delegates through a digital Q&A platform.

In advance of the discussion, delegates were encouraged to engage with one another during the tea break, particularly across generations. Younger participants supported those less familiar with digital tools to submit questions, fostering a spirit of collaboration and shared participation that reflected the wider participative and communal ethos of the Congress.

The conversation itself highlighted several key themes. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of prayer, spirituality, and the creation of reflective spaces in a busy and often noisy world, something particularly resonant in the experience of the Taizé community, where thousands of young people gather each year. The panel also reflected on the evident hunger among young people today for meaning, belonging and authentic encounters with faith when given the opportunity.

A recurring thread was the need to recognise and nurture the many gifts of young people. Panel members spoke of their generosity, openness and capacity for service, noting that when young people are trusted and given meaningful opportunities, they contribute richly to the life of the Church. This included reflections on creating environments where faith can be explored freely, integrated into everyday life and expressed through service and community.

The discussion also acknowledged both the hopes and the challenges of the present moment. While there was clear joy and encouragement at what had emerged through the Congress process, there was also an honest recognition that stepping into new ways of being Church can bring uncertainty. In this context, Archbishop Eamon Martin affirmed his openness to receiving the fruits of the Congress, while reminding delegates that the responsibility for bringing its vision to life rests with the whole diocesan community.

Overall, the panel discussion served to deepen reflection, broaden perspectives and encourage delegates to move forward and make recommendations with confidence, creativity and a commitment to mission in the Archdiocese of Armagh

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Liturgy and Participation Proposal 2: Provide Ongoing Formation for Clergy and Lay Liturgical Ministers

Rank: 1

Recommended – 70.8%

Recommended with Changes – 22.63%

Cannot Recommend – 5.84%

This proposal is the most solid and widely supported of the three in this priority. Its central strength is its clarity. Formation is recognised as the foundation of any meaningful renewal of liturgical life. In an Irish parish setting, where many ministers serve generously but without formal training, this proposal responds directly to a real and pressing need. Improved preaching, better understanding of the theology of the liturgy and clearer knowledge of roles and rubrics would significantly enhance the quality and coherence of parish liturgy.

Another strength is its broad acceptance. Unlike other proposals, it does not provoke major tension or ideological division. It is practical, necessary and capable of being implemented in a structured way at diocesan level. It also supports all other liturgical initiatives, making it a key enabling proposal.

Its only real weakness is the lack of a clearly defined delivery model. Without structured programmes, timelines and accountability, even strong formation initiatives can fail to reach those who need them.

This proposal is considered fully workable and should be prioritised immediately. It is the essential foundation upon which all other liturgical renewal depends.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Prayer and Spirituality Proposal 3: Renewal of Prayer in the Home (Domestic Church)

Rank: 2

Recommended – 70.49%

Recommended with Changes – 25.26%

Cannot Recommend – 4.25%

This proposal carries significant weight, having received strong endorsement and speaks directly to the reality that faith must be lived in the home if it is to endure. Its greatest strength is its clarity of focus. In an Irish context where family-based faith practice has weakened, reclaiming the home as a place of prayer is both pastorally urgent and theologically grounded. The proposal aligns closely with the wider vision of integrating prayer into daily life rather than confining it to church settings.

It is also supported by the other proposals, particularly in its emphasis on accessible resources and the need for formation. This coherence strengthens its credibility and feasibility. The concept of the “domestic church,” while needing clear explanation, offers a simple and powerful framework for renewal.

Its weaknesses lie in implementation. Many families feel unequipped or disconnected from prayer and without support, the proposal risks remaining aspirational. There is also the challenge of engaging those who are already distant from parish life.

Despite this, the proposal is workable and should be prioritised. With simple resources, encouragement and links to parish life, it offers one of the most realistic and impactful pathways for renewal in the diocese.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Faith Formation and Catechesis Proposal 3: Youth and Adult Faith Formation Courses

Rank: 3

Recommended – 67.09%

Recommended with Changes – 27.22%

Cannot Recommend – 5.70%

This proposal is one of the most directly actionable and practical. Its strength lies in its simplicity and flexibility. Offering accessible courses for both youth and adults directly addresses the lack of ongoing formation beyond childhood. In an Irish parish setting, where many adults have received little structured catechesis since school, this initiative meets a clear need. It can also be implemented using existing resources, reducing the burden on parishes.

Another strength is its adaptability. Courses can be delivered at parish or pastoral area level, in-person or online and tailored to different audiences. This makes it accessible and sustainable.

Its main limitation is the risk of low engagement. Without strong invitation and accompaniment, courses may attract only those already committed. There is also a need to ensure quality and consistency.

In addition to the limitations identified, two main initial challenges exist, firstly the challenge of forming those who might deliver youth and adult formation in a consistent and coherent manner or training the trainers as it might be framed. A second challenge is in identifying and naming priority areas for catechesis.

This proposal was considered fully workable and should be implemented immediately, with attention to promotion, accessibility and integration into parish life.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital Evangelisation and Communication Proposal 3: Digital Evangelisation Outreach to Young People and those on the Margins.

Rank: 4

Recommended – 64.49%

Recommended with Changes – 21.74%

Cannot Recommend – 13.77%

This proposal identifies an essential missionary opportunity, namely the digital environment as a place of encounter, especially for young people and those who may feel disconnected from parish structures. Its strength lies in its outward focus. The use of storytelling, testimony and invitation reflects a contemporary and relational approach to evangelisation that resonates with digital culture. In Ireland, where many young people have little direct engagement with parish life, this approach offers a realistic entry point.

However, the proposal is underdeveloped. A major weakness is the lack of clarity around target groups. “Those on the margins” is a broad category and without specificity, outreach risks being unfocused and ineffective. Safeguarding concerns are particularly significant in digital engagement, especially with minors and vulnerable individuals and the absence of a clear framework here is a critical gap. There is also a strong and legitimate concern that digital contact could remain superficial or even contribute to isolation if not clearly connected to real-world relationships.

Additionally, the proposal overlaps with the first two and lacks integration, which could lead to duplication or fragmentation. Without a clear pathway from online engagement to parish participation, its long-term impact would be limited.

It was felt that this proposal is not yet workable in its current form but that Proposal 3 Digital Evangelisation Outreach to Young People and those on the Margins. could become so if integrated with broader diocesan digital strategy, with clear safeguarding, defined audiences and a strong emphasis on moving from digital contact to real community encounter.

The question of forming content creators and identifying and agreeing on topics for this outreach needs to be addressed and this proposal could be linked to Proposal 2 in the ‘Digital Communication and Evangelisation’ section, ‘Develop a Diocesan Digital Formation and Content Creation Hub’.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Faith Formation and Catechesis Proposal 4: Pilot Parish/Pastoral Area Based Post-Confirmation Programmes

Rank: 5

Recommended – 64.19%

Recommended with Changes – 31.08%

Cannot Recommend – 3.38%

This proposal addresses a well-known issue in Irish parish life: the sharp drop-off in engagement after Confirmation. Its strength lies in its focus on relationship, peer leadership and mentoring, which are key to sustaining youth involvement. The recognition that young people need belonging as well as formation is particularly important.

However, the proposal lacks clarity. There is confusion about its relationship to other initiatives, especially Proposal 3 and no clear leadership or content model is defined. There is also a risk of duplication or over-reliance on structured programmes such as awards, which may not foster genuine discipleship.

This proposal was not considered fully workable as a standalone initiative. It becomes viable when integrated into broader youth formation efforts, with a clear pathway from engagement to leadership and a strong relational focus.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Liturgy and Participation Proposal 1: Establish Parish or Pastoral Area Liturgy Leadership Teams Supported by a Re-Established Diocesan Liturgy Commission

Rank: 6

Recommended – 64.0%

Recommended with Changes – 29.33%

Cannot Recommend – 6%

This proposal addresses a genuine need within Irish parish life: the desire for more meaningful, well-prepared and reverent liturgy. Its strongest feature is the clear recognition that formation is essential. The emphasis on improving music, preaching and understanding of the Mass reflects widespread experience of inconsistency in liturgical quality. The proposal also rightly promotes shared responsibility between clergy and laity, which is necessary in the current pastoral reality. Re-establishing a diocesan commission offers an important opportunity for coherence, guidance and support.

However, the weaknesses are significant. There is evident tension around roles, authority and liturgical norms, which could lead to conflict if not carefully managed. In an Irish context, where volunteer capacity is limited, the creation of additional structures risks overload. There is also a strong undercurrent of fear of losing reverence, of excessive creativity and of change, which may hinder implementation. The lack of a clear, simple model further complicates the proposal.

This proposal is considered partially workable, but only if simplified. It should begin with diocesan leadership and small-scale pastoral area pilots, with a strong formation-first approach. Without this, it risks confusion, resistance and limited impact.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital Evangelisation and Communication Proposal 2: Develop a Diocesan Digital Formation and Content Creation Hub

Rank: 7

Recommended – 63.71%

Recommended with Changes – 19.4%

Cannot Recommend – 16.87%

This proposal is one of the most practical and strategically coherent among the digital initiatives. Its key strength lies in recognising the need for a central diocesan resource that can support parishes with high-quality, accessible and theologically sound content. In an Irish parish setting, where many clergy and volunteers lack time or expertise to produce digital material, a shared hub could significantly improve communication and formation. The emphasis on training, consistency and the use of existing platforms demonstrates strong pastoral realism and avoids unnecessary duplication.

A further strength is the instinct, expressed in feedback, to prioritise oversight over creation. This reflects an awareness that vast amounts of high-quality Catholic content already exist and that the role of the diocese may be to gather, adapt and distribute rather than produce everything from scratch. This approach is both cost-effective and sustainable.

The weaknesses are primarily related to scope and clarity. The term “hub” remains undefined and without a phased plan, the proposal risks becoming overly ambitious. Financial sustainability is a real concern, as is the possibility that resources may be underused if not effectively promoted or integrated into parish life. There is also an ongoing tension about whether digital formation can genuinely complement embodied faith experience.

This proposal was considered workable and advisable at diocesan level, provided it, begins modestly, focused on oversight, training and improving existing platforms, before expanding into original content creation.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Liturgy and Participation Proposal 3: Create Pathways for Youth, Young Adult and Family Participation in Liturgical Life

Rank: **8**

Recommended – 62.09%

Recommended with Changes – 29.41%

Cannot Recommend – 8.5%

This proposal reflects a widespread concern about the disengagement of young people and families from parish liturgy. Its strength lies in its realism. It recognises that participation must be meaningful and rooted in understanding, not simply in assigning roles. The emphasis on music, choirs and altar serving as entry points is pastorally sound in the Irish context. The call for intergenerational liturgy, rather than separate “youth Masses,” also reflects a desire to maintain unity within the parish community.

However, the proposal is underdeveloped. There is no clear pathway for engaging young people from initial contact through to formation and leadership. The absence of a strong young adult voice is a notable gap and without leadership, implementation will be difficult. There is also a tension between inclusion and fear of “performance,” which can limit creativity and discourage participation.

This proposal is not considered fully workable as a standalone initiative. It becomes workable when integrated into Proposal 1, with a clear formation pathway and focus on intergenerational participation. Without this integration, it risks limited impact and continued disengagement.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Prayer and Spirituality Proposal 2: Establish Diocesan Retreat and Prayer Pathways for Youth, Families and Adults

Rank: 9

Recommended – 58.23%

Recommended with Changes – 39.87%

Cannot Recommend – 1.27%

The proposal to establish diocesan retreat and prayer pathways shows considerable strength within an Irish parish context. It reflects a deep appreciation for retreats and pilgrimages as moments of genuine encounter with Christ, something that has historically borne fruit in Irish faith life. Its emphasis on inclusion across all age groups, varied styles of prayer, and the development of retreat teams demonstrates a mission-focused and pastorally sensitive vision. The recognition that faith formation must move beyond one-off experiences towards ongoing discipleship is particularly strong and aligns well with current pastoral needs.

However, significant weaknesses remain. The lack of a clear funding model and reliance on already stretched parish resources raises concerns about sustainability. There is also a risk of over-ambition, with too many initiatives proposed without sufficient prioritisation. Critically, the absence of robust follow-up structures could result in retreats becoming isolated “high points” with little lasting impact in parish life. Furthermore, many parishes may lack the trained personnel to implement such pathways effectively.

The proposal is considered workable in the diocese, but only if implemented with careful focus, strong leadership, and realistic resourcing. Without these amendments, its effectiveness will be limited.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Faith Formation and Catechesis Proposal 2: Family-Centred Sacramental Formation

Rank: 10

Recommended – 53.8%

Recommended with Changes – 31.65%

Cannot Recommend – 13.92%

This proposal reflects a strong and necessary shift toward recognising the family as the primary place of faith formation. Its strength lies in its pastoral realism: it acknowledges the gap between sacramental moments and ongoing faith life in Irish families. The emphasis on intergenerational formation and accompaniment is particularly appropriate in a context where many parents feel ill-equipped to support their children's faith. The proposal also aligns well with broader renewal efforts focused on the "domestic church."

Its weaknesses centre on implementation. There is a delicate balance between encouragement and expectation. If perceived as compulsory, it risks alienating already disengaged families; if too optional, it may have little impact. The absence of a clear pathway from Baptism onwards also limits its coherence.

This proposal is considered workable provided it is approached with pastoral sensitivity. It should prioritise invitation, simple resources and gradual engagement rather than an explicit obligation for parishes, pastoral areas and families to engage.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital Evangelisation and Communication Proposal 1: Create Diocesan Digital Mission Teams that are Regionally Based and supported by the Diocese

Rank: 11

Recommended – 52.6%

Recommended with Changes – 37.65%

Cannot Recommend – 9.75%

This proposal reflects a growing awareness within the Catholic Church in Ireland that evangelisation must include a credible presence in digital spaces. Its primary strength lies in its missionary intent. It recognises that younger generations live significant parts of their lives online and that the Church must be present and engage there intentionally rather than passively. The idea of regionally based teams supported by the diocese is also pastorally sensible, as it balances local knowledge with central coordination. The emphasis on quality, consistency and involving digitally skilled lay people, especially younger adults, is particularly valuable in an Irish context where digital communication across parishes is often uneven.

However, the proposal faces notable weaknesses. There is a deep cultural and theological hesitation about digital engagement replacing embodied participation, especially following the experience of online Mass during COVID-19. This concern, while valid, risks limiting creativity. More practically, there is no clear governance structure, funding model, or leadership framework. Many parishes lack even basic digital capacity, so the expectation of regional teams may be unrealistic without significant diocesan, parish and regional investment. Concerns around safeguarding, GDPR and content authenticity are also substantial and require robust systems.

Overall, the proposal is potentially workable, but only if significantly simplified. Beginning with a small diocesan core team, conducting a skills audit and piloting in select regions would be essential. It must remain clearly oriented toward inviting people into real parish life rather than substituting for it.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Ecosystem of Parish, School and Family Proposal 2: Family Faith Support and Domestic Church Initiative

Rank: 12

Recommended – 42.86%

Recommended with Changes – 55.36%

Cannot Recommend – 1.79%

This proposal is widely regarded as the most pastorally grounded and mission-oriented of the three proposals associated with the priority area of 'Ecosystem of Parish, School and Family'. Its central strength lies in reclaiming the family as the primary locus of faith formation, an approach deeply rooted in Church teaching and highly relevant in contemporary Irish society, where institutional religious practice has declined significantly.

The emphasis on simple, accessible resources, particularly digital tools, demonstrates a strong awareness of modern family life. The proposal's focus on integrating faith into the home, rather than relying solely on parish programmes, is both realistic and sustainable. It also shows maturity in recognising the need for family formation, rather than assuming capacity or confidence already exists.

Nonetheless, its weaknesses lie in the risk of over-idealism. Many Irish families today have little connection to regular practice and without ongoing accompaniment, resources alone are unlikely to be effective. The concept of the "domestic church" may also be unfamiliar or abstract, requiring careful and clear explanation. Additionally, the proposal does not fully address diverse family situations, including single-parent households or those disconnected from parish life.

Despite these limitations, the proposal is relatively low-cost, scalable and adaptable. With appropriate support structures, such as parent gatherings and simple catechetical guidance, it is highly achievable.

This proposal, however, was judged workable and should be prioritised at diocesan level, particularly if implemented gradually with strong pastoral accompaniment and clear communication.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Ecosystem of Parish, School and Family Proposal 1: Parish/School/Family Partnership Framework

Rank: 13

Recommended – 42.77%

Recommended with Changes – 48.43%

Cannot Recommend – 8.81%

This proposal reflects a strong and timely recognition, within the Catholic Church in Ireland, that faith formation can no longer be outsourced primarily to schools. Its greatest strength lies in its clear emphasis on shared responsibility between parish, school and family, a sound vision that aligns with baptismal theology. The proposal also benefits from practical insights such as the need for lay catechists, parent engagement and localised teams, all of which are realistic responses to declining clergy numbers and changing parish dynamics.

However, significant weaknesses emerge around feasibility. In an Irish parish setting, where volunteer fatigue and limited clerical resources are already pressing issues, the framework risks being overly complex and labour-intensive. The reliance on teachers, many of whom may not be practising Catholics or resident locally, further weakens its practicality. Additionally, the lack of a clearly defined leadership structure and implementation pathway creates ambiguity that could stall progress.

There is also a tension between collaboration and control, with some feedback suggesting a retreat from partnership toward parish dominance. This risks alienating schools rather than strengthening relationships.

Overall, while the vision is pastorally and theologically sound, it requires substantial simplification, clearer role definition and pilot implementation. With refinement and strong diocesan support, the proposal is potentially workable, but in its current form, it is not yet realistically implementable across a diocese.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Belonging Proposal 1: Establish a Parish/Pastoral Area Welcome and Hospitality Team to ensure that every person feels recognised, invited and connected to parish life.

Rank: 14

Recommended – 42.52%

Recommended with Changes – 54.33%

Cannot Recommend – 3.15%

This proposal has real merit in an Irish parish setting because it starts from the pastoral reality that many people no longer experience the parish as a place of personal belonging. Its strongest feature is the insistence that welcome must be intentional, visible and relational. In many parishes, especially where Mass attendance is declining and new households, migrants or younger families feel anonymous, a more conscious culture of greeting, invitation and follow-up could help people move from passive attendance to active participation. The emphasis on lay leadership is also a strength, as it reflects current diocesan reality where priests cannot carry every dimension of parish life on their own. The recognition that belonging should be linked to sacraments, especially Baptism, gives the proposal an important ecclesial foundation.

Its weaknesses, however, are equally clear. Irish parish culture, particularly in rural settings, can be wary of anything that feels overly managed or intrusive. A hospitality model that is too structured risks appearing artificial and may deter the very people it hopes to attract. Capacity is another serious issue. Many parishes already depend on a small core of volunteers and without formation and clear boundaries, new teams could quickly become unsustainable. The proposal also lacks a concrete implementation model that distinguishes what is suitable in a large urban parish from what is realistic in a small rural one.

Overall, this proposal is workable in the diocese, but only if it is kept simple, locally adaptable and rooted in authentic relationships rather than programmes. It should be piloted first, supported at pastoral area level and accompanied by formation in welcome, accompaniment and baptismal belonging.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Prayer and Spirituality Proposal 1: Develop Parish/Pastoral Area and Diocesan Prayer Guide Ministry for Individual and Group Accompaniment

Rank: 15

Recommended – 42.41%

Recommended with Changes – 46.84%

Cannot Recommend – 10.76%

This proposal reflects a deep spiritual hunger within Irish parish life and a clear desire to move beyond routine prayer toward genuine encounter with God. Its greatest strength is its emphasis on authenticity. The recognition that prayer guides must be spiritually mature, well-formed and credible witnesses is particularly important in an Irish context where superficial or overly programmatic initiatives often fail.

The proposal also builds wisely on existing practices such as Eucharistic Adoration, Lectio Divina and contemplative prayer, rather than introducing entirely new structures. The encouragement of lay involvement is another key strength, especially given declining clergy numbers.

However, there are significant weaknesses. The lack of a clear training pathway, leadership structure and implementation model makes the proposal difficult to operationalise. Concerns about volunteer capacity are very real and resistance to one-to-one accompaniment highlights both cultural caution and limited resources. There is also a risk of fragmentation if multiple prayer styles develop without coherence, or conversely, stagnation if over-caution prevents action.

Overall, this proposal is potentially workable, but only if introduced gradually through pilot programmes at pastoral area level. It requires a strong formation-first approach, clear diocesan guidance and a focus on group-based prayer as the norm. Without this structure, it risks inconsistency and limited impact.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Belonging Proposal 3: Encourage Youth and Family Belonging Through the Use of Parish Facilities and Increased Parish Participation

Rank: 16

Recommended – 39.56%

Recommended with Changes – 54.40%

Cannot Recommend – 6.04%

This proposal addresses one of the most urgent issues facing the Church in Ireland – the weak connection many young people and families now have with parish life. Its strength lies in recognising that belonging will not be rebuilt simply by offering more events. The best part of the feedback is the shift from activities to participation. In an Irish parish setting, this is crucial. Young people are more likely to remain involved where they are given visible roles, real responsibility and a sense that they are part of the worshipping and serving community. The proposal also shows practical awareness by recommending intergenerational models, connections with schools, GAA clubs and existing community structures. This reflects the reality that parish outreach must meet families where they already gather. The suggestion to work at pastoral area level is another major strength, since many individual parishes no longer have the numbers, leaders or facilities to sustain youth ministry on their own.

The weaknesses are substantial. There is no clear youth discipleship pathway and without one the proposal risks becoming a list of aspirations rather than a viable model. Facilities alone will not create belonging and the proposal can drift too easily toward activity without formation. The shortage of trained leaders is perhaps the greatest obstacle. Many Irish parishes do not have younger adult volunteers prepared to accompany teenagers or families in a sustained way. Family disengagement also remains a major challenge and parish initiatives cannot succeed if parents are entirely passive.

The feeling at the Congress was that this proposal is only partially workable as it stands. It becomes workable at diocesan level if restructured around pastoral areas, leadership formation and a clear pathway of formation, participation and leadership. Without that, it risks overreach and limited long-term fruit.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Faith Formation and Catechesis Proposal 1: Establish a Diocesan Catechetical Framework and Parish/Pastoral Area Based Catechetical Teams.

Rank: 17

Recommended – 39.24%

Recommended with Changes – 55.06%

Cannot Recommend – 5.70%

This proposal responds directly to a widely acknowledged crisis in faith literacy across Irish parishes. Its principal strength is its clarity of vision: catechesis must be lifelong, structured and rooted in authentic Church teaching. The strong support for trained lay catechists reflects current pastoral reality, where reliance on clergy alone is no longer sustainable. The use of pastoral areas to share resources is also a practical strength, particularly in rural Ireland where individual parishes lack capacity. The desire for age-based pathways and doctrinal depth shows a mature recognition that faith formation must move beyond sacramental preparation and school-based religion.

However, the weaknesses are substantial. There is no clear implementation model and concerns about training, its length, accessibility and cost, are significant. Volunteer fatigue is a real issue and parishes may struggle to identify suitable catechists. There is also a risk of creating an overly bureaucratic structure that lacks local ownership. Without careful design, the proposal could overreach and fail.

It is considered that this proposal has potential, but only through phased implementation, simplified training pathways and strong diocesan leadership. Pilot programmes are essential to ensure sustainability and quality.

The development of a diocesan catechetical framework could provide clarity on content and methodology, identify key collaborators, and outline resource implications, thereby helping to guide many of the 19 proposals that might otherwise lack coherence.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Belonging Proposal 2: Help all parishioners, especially the vulnerable to feel cared for, heard and valued.

Rank: 18

Recommended – 34.86%

Recommended with Changes – 57.14%

Cannot Recommend – 7.43%

This proposal is one of the strongest and most clearly aligned with the mission of the Church in an Irish diocesan context. Its central strength is that it speaks directly to a deeply recognisable pastoral reality that many people in parish communities are elderly, bereaved, isolated, poor, living with disability, or carrying forms of vulnerability that are often hidden.

The proposal rightly understands that the Church's witness is measured not only by liturgy or structures, but by whether people experience care, presence and compassion. The support expressed for visitation teams, outreach beyond church buildings and intergenerational involvement reflects a mature and credible pastoral instinct. It also wisely recognises that this work can build on existing ministries and organisations such as the St Vincent de Paul, Eucharistic ministers and local outreach networks, rather than starting from nothing.

Its weaknesses lie mainly in execution. Parishes often lack sufficient volunteers and those who are available may already be heavily committed. There is also a significant risk of confusion between pastoral accompaniment and professional care. Complex needs involving mental health, family crisis, addiction or safeguarding cannot be managed by goodwill alone. The absence of a clear training framework and role definition is therefore a serious gap. Unless boundaries are explicit volunteers could become overwhelmed or exposed to situations beyond their competence.

Even so, this proposal is more practical than many others because it can begin modestly and respond to obvious need. It is workable in the diocese, provided it is implemented gradually, with mandatory safeguarding and listening-skills training, clear referral pathways and cooperation with professional agencies. It should be framed as compassionate outreach, not as an attempt for the parish to solve every problem.

6. SATURDAY FEEDBACK – CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Ecosystem of Parish, School and Family Proposal 3: Community Hubs and Shared Faith Experiences for Young People and Families

Rank: 19

Recommended – 31.9%

Recommended with Changes – 49.69%

Cannot Recommend – 18.4%

This proposal responds to a genuine need for belonging and relational engagement within parish life. Its strength lies in recognising that faith today is often mediated through community and encounter rather than formal structures. The idea of hubs, retreats and shared experiences reflects an understanding of contemporary pastoral realities, particularly the need to engage young people and rebuild a sense of Church as community.

In an Irish context, where many parish facilities are underutilised, there is real potential to repurpose existing infrastructure creatively. The proposal's encouragement to build on current groups and adopt a pastoral area approach is also practical and forward-thinking.

However, the weaknesses are considerable. The lack of clear leadership structures and trained personnel presents a major barrier. Many parishes already struggle to sustain existing initiatives and new proposals risk overextension and volunteer burnout. There is also a significant risk that such hubs become primarily social rather than explicitly faith-centred, diluting their purpose.

Engaging young people remains a particular challenge and the absence of a clearly defined youth or young adult pathway weakens the proposal further. Without this, long-term impact is unlikely.

Overall, while the vision is attractive and pastorally relevant, it requires careful planning, strong leadership and clear Christ-centred identity.

It was considered that this proposal is partially workable, but only through pilot programmes at pastoral area level, not immediate diocesan-wide implementation.

6. SUNDAY FEEDBACK – PATHWAYS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Focus of the Sunday Session

On Sunday morning, following the presentation of the proposal rankings, delegates were invited to move from discernment toward implementation by engaging with a focused question: *What do we need to put in place to achieve this proposal?*

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to consider all nineteen proposals in detail. Instead, the Congress deliberately focused on the two highest-ranked proposals: *Liturgy and Participation - Proposal 2: Provide Ongoing Formation for Clergy and Lay Liturgical Ministers*, and *Prayer and Spirituality – Proposal 3: Renewal of Prayer in the Home (The Domestic Church)*.

While this necessarily limited the scope of discussion, the quality and depth of the feedback generated was both positive and constructive. More significantly, the responses moved beyond the specifics of the two proposals and began to articulate underlying principles, patterns, and needs that have relevance across the full set of proposals. In this sense, the Sunday feedback does not simply advance the implementation of two priority areas; it offers important insight into how implementation might be approached more broadly across the life of the diocese.

From Ideas to Action

A notable feature of the discussion was the shift in focus from ideas to action. Delegates engaged seriously with the question of what needs to be put in place in order to bring about change. This resulted in a set of reflections that, while grounded in the two selected proposals, reveal common themes that can serve as guiding principles for implementation across all priority areas.

The Need for a Joined-Up Approach

One of the clearest insights to emerge is the need for a more coherent and integrated approach at diocesan level. Delegates consistently highlighted that, although much good work is already taking place, it is often experienced as fragmented or disconnected. Initiatives exist, resources are available, and commitment is evident, yet these are not always linked within a shared framework. This points to the importance of developing a more joined-up approach, where efforts are aligned, mutually reinforcing, and clearly situated within an overarching vision for the diocese. Such an approach would not replace local initiative but would provide the coherence needed to sustain and scale what is already bearing fruit.

Accompaniment and Pathways for Formation

Closely connected to this is the emergence of an instinct toward accompaniment and pathway-based formation. Across both proposals, delegates emphasised the need for formation that is ongoing, staged, and relational. There was a clear recognition that one-off training events or isolated initiatives are insufficient to bring about lasting change. Instead, what is required are structured pathways that accompany individuals over time, supporting their development in faith, ministry, and participation. This insight is particularly significant, as it offers a model that can be applied not only to liturgical formation and prayer in the home, but to all areas of diocesan life.

6. SUNDAY FEEDBACK – PATHWAYS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Strengthening Strategic Capacity

At the same time, the feedback highlights the need to strengthen the strategic dimension of implementation. While delegates demonstrated a strong ability to identify issues and generate ideas, there was less evidence of prioritisation, sequencing, and long-term planning. This suggests that, alongside pastoral energy and creativity, there is a need for greater clarity around how initiatives are to be structured, resourced, and sustained over time. Without this, there is a risk that the richness of the ideas generated will not translate into meaningful and lasting change.

Faith in Everyday Life: An Emerging Model

Another significant theme emerging from the feedback is the importance of embedding faith within the context of everyday life. In the discussion on prayer and spirituality, delegates repeatedly emphasised the need to root prayer in the rhythms and realities of daily living, particularly within the home. This points toward an emerging model of inculturation, where faith is not confined to formal settings but becomes part of the ordinary experiences of family life, relationships, and routine. While this insight arose in the context of the “Domestic Church,” it has implications far beyond it, suggesting a broader shift toward a more integrated and lived expression of faith.

A Renewed Focus on Prayer

Linked to this is a strong and consistent call for a renewed focus on prayer. Delegates expressed both a desire for deeper engagement with prayer and an awareness that current approaches are not fully effective in fostering this. This dual recognition, of the centrality of prayer and the limitations of present practice, represents an important moment in the life of the diocese. It suggests openness to renewal, while also highlighting the need for approaches that are accessible, meaningful, and rooted in lived experience.

Towards a More Intentional Understanding of Ministry

The feedback also reveals an implicit movement toward a more intentional understanding of ministry. While not explicitly framed in theological terms, many of the responses point toward the need for clearly defined roles, appropriate formation, and greater recognition of lay participation in the life of the Church. This suggests a shift from a model based primarily on informal volunteering to one that recognises and supports ministry as a stable and integral aspect of ecclesial life. Such an approach would not only strengthen participation but would also contribute to a more coherent and sustainable structure of co-responsibility.

6. SUNDAY FEEDBACK – PATHWAYS TO IMPLEMENTATION

Inclusion and Diversity

A further development is the increased emphasis on inclusion and diversity. Delegates demonstrated a growing awareness of the need to engage those who are often marginalised or excluded, including individuals with disabilities, those who are housebound, and those who have become disconnected from parish life. While this awareness is still developing, it represents an important step toward a more inclusive vision of Church, one that seeks to ensure that all have a place and a voice within the community.

Emerging Limitations and Challenges

At the same time, the feedback highlights certain limitations that will need to be addressed. There is a tendency to frame the life of the Church primarily in terms of roles and functions, particularly in relation to the celebration of Mass. While this reflects the central importance of the Eucharist, it can also lead to a narrowing of perspective, where the broader mission of the Church is less clearly articulated. Similarly, some responses reflect a reliance on familiar solutions, drawing on past practices or existing models rather than exploring new approaches. This suggests that, while the desire for change is present, the imagination required to fully realise that change is still developing.

Conclusion: Insight for Wider Implementation

Taken together, the Sunday feedback provides valuable insight into the conditions necessary for effective implementation. It highlights the importance of coherence, accompaniment, and strategic clarity, while also pointing toward deeper theological and pastoral shifts, particularly in relation to prayer, ministry, and the integration of faith into daily life. Although the discussion was limited to two proposals, the themes that have emerged are not confined to those areas. Rather, they offer a set of guiding principles that can inform the implementation of all proposals arising from the Congress.

In this way, the Sunday session can be seen not as a narrowing of focus, but as a lens through which the wider work of the Congress can be viewed. The insights generated provide a foundation upon which a more integrated, intentional, and sustainable approach to renewal can be built. The task now is to take these insights forward, ensuring that they are translated into concrete structures, pathways, and actions that can support the ongoing life and mission of the diocese.



7. NEXT STEPS



The proposed timeline for the implementation of the Pastoral Plan for the Archdiocese of Armagh (2026 - 2033), outlined below, reflects a measured and realistic response to the insights that emerged from the Diocesan Congress on Youth, Family and Faith. The timeline recognises that meaningful renewal in the Church requires not only vision, but also patience, structure and sustained commitment.

The formal launch of a shared vision for renewal in the autumn will mark a significant move from discernment to mission. The preparation for the Congress, and the Congress itself, was synodal in character, modelling a Church that listens, prays and acts together. This spirit must be carried forward into the implementation phase. The launch should therefore not be seen as the beginning of a new initiative or project, but the continuation of a journey that is already underway, one that is grounded in the lived experience and faith of the people of the diocese.

The first year (October 2026 to September 2027), will focus on identifying resources and is necessary and important. Feedback from the Congress clearly highlighted issues of capacity, fragmentation and a lack of clarity in existing structures. This period will allow parishes, pastoral areas and diocesan leadership to take stock of what is already in place while honestly assessing the gaps that exist in formation and infrastructure. It will also create space for a more coherent approach ensuring that future initiatives are sustainable.

The Diocesan Pastoral Team will provide regional workshops during the year to help parishes review their resources, reflect on their needs and to begin the process of preparation and formation.

The extended period of formation and training from October 2027 to June 2029 is arguably the most critical phase of the entire timeline. The Congress repeatedly emphasised that renewal depends on on-going formation and accompaniment. This phase directly responds to that insight. By investing in people, clergy, lay leaders and volunteers, the diocese is laying the foundations for long-term change. In particular, the focus on establishing a network of Youth and Family Ministry addresses one of the most urgent pastoral needs identified; the weak connection between young people, families and parish life. However, the success of this phase will depend on realistic expectations. Without careful planning, there is a risk of overburdening existing volunteers.

7. NEXT STEPS

The inclusion of regional reviews in October 2030 and October 2031 demonstrates a commitment to accountability and reflection. These moments will provide an opportunity not only to measure progress and identifiable outcomes, but also to listen again to identify what is working, what is not and where adjustments and modifications are needed. This reflects the synodal principle that discernment is ongoing, not just a one-off event. Importantly, these reviews will help prevent stagnation and ensure that the plan remains responsive to the changing pastoral realities that may occur.

The preparation for the next Diocesan Congress beginning in 2032, which is designated as the Patrician Year, carries symbolic and spiritual significance. It will continue to link the process to the missionary vision of Saint Patrick, our patron, and reinforce the call, echoed throughout the Congress, to “put out into the deep” with courage and trust. This stage will call the whole diocesan community to reflect on its journey and to renew its sense of mission.

Finally, the Diocesan Congress in October 2033, during the Year of Redemption, provides a natural culmination to the seven-year process. It will offer a space to evaluate progress, celebrate growth and discern future priorities. In keeping with the spirit of the 2026 Congress, it should again be a moment of thanksgiving, prayerful listening and shared responsibility.

Overall, the timeline is ambitious and it will be challenging. Its strength lies in its emphasis on formation, reflection and gradual implementation. If sustained by prayer, supported by leadership and rooted in the realities of parish life, it offers a credible pathway for renewal in the Archdiocese of Armagh.



7. NEXT STEPS

Timetable for Implementation

Autumn 2026	Launch of the 'Shared Vision for Renewal' in the Archdiocese of Armagh 2026-2033
Autumn 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishes, Pastoral Areas and the diocese decide which proposals to focus on and identify the resources and personnel they need. • Regional Meetings with parish personnel to review available resources, reflect on needs and begin foundational formation.
October 2027 to June 2029	Period of Formation and Training for parish, pastoral area and diocesan personnel to accompany the foundational work that will be necessary to set up a network of Youth and Family Ministry across the diocese.
Oct 2030	Regional Review of Progress
Oct 2031	Regional Review of Progress
October 2032 (Patrician Year)	Beginning of Preparation for the next Diocesan Congress and Review of Progress
October 2033 (Year of Redemption)	Diocesan Congress to Review Progress and propose Strategy for the next seven-year period.

Appendix 1.1: Pope Leo XIV's Message and Blessing



Prot. n° 2695/26

Your Grace,

The Substitute of the Secretariat of State has asked me to convey to Your Grace the following Message of His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State:

The Most Reverend Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh
Primate of All Ireland

His Holiness Pope Leo XIV sends heartfelt greetings of good wishes to those taking part in the Diocesan Congress on "Youth, Family and Faith". He trusts that this stage in the continuing journey of renewal and mission will help all in the Archdiocese of Armagh to rekindle the flame of faith once ignited by Saint Patrick so many centuries ago.

In a particular way, His Holiness encourages the young people present to open their hearts to discover the real and lasting love of God, upon which they can build their lives without fear of failure or disappointment (cf. *Mt 7:24-27*). He likewise prays that all youth in Ireland may discover Jesus as a true friend, and allow that friendship to transform and guide them in discerning his will for their lives.

Moreover, at a time when the family is facing diverse challenges, Pope Leo XIV trusts that this Congress will seek concrete ways to strengthen the ties between parish and family life in such a way that, by mutually building each other up, the Church community will truly contribute to a stable and life-giving culture (cf. *1 Thess 5:11*).

Entrusting all the participants to the intercession of the Saints of Armagh and the maternal care of Our Lady of Knock, the Holy Father imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of serenity and revival in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State

I gladly avail of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency sentiments of my highest esteems, and I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor
Apostolic Nuncio

Appendix 1.2: Archbishop Eamon's Words of Reflection

Opening Liturgy 20th March 2026, Armagh City Hotel



“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”

Poor Simon! There he was, washing the nets, tired and likely despondent after a night of poor fishing; and along comes Jesus - a carpenter and a teacher - encouraging them not to give up.

I imagine exhausted Simon thinking, “With all due respect Jesus, you stick to the carpentry and the preaching; we’ll concentrate on the fishing. Sure haven’t we been out all night and have caught nothing? But if you say so... I will put out the nets - into the deep”.

Simon sensed in the voice of Jesus a strong message: “Trust me!”

And when they had done this, they netted such a huge number of fish that their boats were at sinking point! It was a life-changing moment for Simon.

Dear friends, we begin our Congress with a whole mixture of emotions: excitement and hope; a great sense of achievement at having reached this point after five years of preparation, prayer and reflection? But perhaps for some, there’s a certain amount of scepticism as we begin our work – despondency even?

‘Sure haven’t we been trying for years to address many pastoral challenges and we seem to be getting nowhere? We are rowing against a very strong tide of secular culture with all its confused and empty promises. We’re struggling to face the reality of the ‘fall-off’ in the practice of religion; the decline in vocations to the priesthood and religious life; serious challenges to the credibility of our message after the scandals of abuse. At times we’re just exhausted trying to bridge the gap between faith and culture.’

But then we hear again the voice of the Lord: “Trust me...do not be afraid! Put out into the deep and let down the nets for a catch.”

Friends, this week, especially, we think of our patron, Saint Patrick who, like Simon Peter, had the courage to trust in the Lord - to put out into the deep.

Having heard in a dream “the voice of the Irish”, calling him “Come back, holy youth! Come back and walk among us once more”, Patrick returned to Ireland as a missionary bishop and, filled with the Holy Spirit, he let down the nets for a catch. And what a catch he had!

Thousands of people were baptised and confirmed; large numbers of the sons and daughters of Ireland - including those of leaders and kings - chose to be ordained as priests or consecrated religious women and men in the service of the gospel.

For Patrick, baptism and confirmation were not just ‘once-off’ events. They were the gateway to a personal journey of faith and friendship with God.

That’s the message we bring to our Congress this weekend on Youth, Family and Faith’:

We, the ‘People of St Patrick’ don’t just say “we WERE baptised” or “we WERE confirmed”, but rather, “we ARE baptised, and we ARE confirmed in Christ”.

“We ARE sent”, and “we are ready for the mission!”.

“We are prepared to play our part in the future of our parishes and diocese!”

This weekend we will have an opportunity to distil further the ideas and proposals that have been emerging through many hundreds of ‘conversations in the spirit’ with thousands of people of all ages across the Archdiocese of Armagh over the past five years.

Appendix 1.2: Archbishop Eamon's Words of Reflection

Opening Liturgy 20th March 2026, Armagh City Hotel

We are aiming to chart a pastoral course to guide us over the next seven years of the life and mission of the Church in this diocese. Jeremiah said in the first reading that the Lord knows the plans he has in mind for us. "They are plans for peace not for disaster. The gives us a future and a hope."

Our Congress aims to help us discern further that future and that hope. This Congress is taking a place at a time when many people in Ireland, of all ages, are struggling to find hope. They are seeking something solid; something to nourish their interior lives, sustain their well-being and protect their mental and spiritual health. A lot of people are realising the emptiness of secular messages in this fragile and troubled world.

We believers hold a precious treasure in our faith, and in our Church, which can provide sound stepping stones and solid teaching to guide and sustain us and provide us with a 'reason for living', a 'reason for hoping'.

Dear friends, I invite you to enter into this weekend with a spirit of courage and confidence:

Consider what is Jesus asking of you? In what ways is he calling you to use your gifts, even if it means going out of your usual depth, to lower your nets? What part are you being asked to play in the Church, in your family, your school or college, your workplace, your community and parish? What does God want of you at this time in your life?

Do not be afraid! Trust in God! Put out into the deep!

I invite you to participate fully in the conversations and reflections and discussions this weekend. You are here because the Lord has called you to be here. Your ideas and views matter as we seek to put together a pastoral roadmap to guide our steps in the path of Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life!

I wish our Congress every blessing, and ask that St Patrick, St Brigid, St Malachy, St Oliver Plunkett, and all the saints of Armagh guide us and inspire us. Come Holy Spirit!

I thank Pope Leo for sending us the following special message for our Congress.

+ Archbishop Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/fYRXq6yRd10?si=LZN1uPeKHMBgNpcl>

Appendix 1.3: Bishop Michael's Homily, Congress Mass, Saturday 21st March 2026, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh



The prophet Ezekiel, in the first reading for this vigil Mass for the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, speaks to the Israelites living in exile in Babylon. They were a people in despair who believed that all their hope had gone. They felt like they were dead and buried like dry bones. Yet God makes a promise to them “I will put my spirit in you, and you shall live.” God brings life where often people see only emptiness and misery. In the Gospel we also see something similar take place when Jesus stands before the tomb of his friend Lazarus and calls him out of death into life. What seemed so final was not the end.

This message is important for us today in Ireland. When we examine on a surface level the current condition of the faith on this island it can be easy to feel discouraged. We see declining Mass attendance, fewer young families participating in our parish life and a popular culture that often seems to be moving further away from Gospel values. It appears as though something that was once so strong has become fragile. There are moments when we too feel like the Israelites in exile, wondering how our faith can flourish and thrive again, particularly among the younger generations.

Sometimes in the midst of such negativity and gloom we can easily believe that we are the first generation to face such challenges. Yes, there are specific problems and obstacles we have never faced before, but the history of our Church has been filled with moments of crisis. We need only look at the life of Saint Oliver Plunkett, whose statue stands here in this cathedral and whose witness stands at the heart of this diocese. When he returned from Rome in March 1670 to take up his ministry as Archbishop of Armagh it could be said that the Church in Ireland was in a worse situation than it is today. Under the Penal Laws, the practice of the Catholic faith was outlawed and suppressed. Priests were few, churches were closed, and the faithful often had to gather to worship and pray in secret.

Yet Oliver Plunkett did not give into despair or become discouraged by what he encountered. With courage and determination, he travelled tirelessly through the diocese and beyond, encouraging the faithful, reforming the clergy, and rebuilding the structures of the Church. In just a few short years he confirmed thousands of people and brought new energy to a wounded Church. Even when he was unjustly condemned and brought to the scaffold at Tyburn, the moment captured in the statue here, his faith never faltered.

His life reminds us that renewal in the Church begins first and foremost with courage, faith, and sacrifice. Today, as I said, our challenges are different, but they are no less real. Secularisation, cultural change and the wounds of past scandals have left many young people and indeed their parents, distant from the Church. Yet there are also signs of hope.

His life reminds us that renewal in the Church begins first and foremost with courage, faith, and sacrifice. Today, as I said, our challenges are different, but they are no less real. Secularisation, cultural change and the wounds of past scandals have left many young people and indeed their parents, distant from the Church. Yet there are also signs of hope.

Recent research by Stephen Bullivant of St Mary's University, London, and Emily Nelson of Queen's University Belfast points to what they describe as a possible “turning tide.” Their study suggests that while secularisation remains strong, there are small but significant signs of renewed openness to faith among younger generations. Some young adults are seeking meaning, belonging, and purpose in ways that previous generations did not. In many cases they are encountering faith through online engagement with resources they find in podcasts and videos. This reminds us of something we must never lose sight of that the Spirit of God is always at work in our world even in places we would never dream of. This realisation gives us hope

Appendix 1.3: Bishop Michael's Homily, Congress Mass, Saturday 21st March 2026, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh

But hope alone is not enough. There must also be action. Saint Oliver Plunkett, did not opt for an easy life or stay in a place of comfort. He knew that he had to respond to the situation he found himself in with missionary zeal. To be effective we have got to do the same today. We cannot play it safe or believe it's business as usual. We need to take risks to ensure that we reach out to those who have turned their backs and walked away from us.

In our diocesan consultation over the past year on Youth and Family ministry six priorities emerged that the delegates at our Congress made recommendations on today. They are all crucial for the future of our faith and our local Church. I do, however, think that it was significant that the issue of belonging featured so prominently.

I was fortunate enough to have attended a discussion in Rome during the past week entitled 'Today Who is my Neighbour' which focused on the breakdown of community in this digital age and the negative effects it is having on people's health and well-being. Pope Leo reminded us in his address to us that "urgent attention must also be given to people's mental health, particularly that of young people, because invisible psychological wounds are no less severe than those that are visible". The other speakers at the event reinforced the message that the renewal of community in parish life has a huge role to play in helping the young, and all ages, to reconnect with each other and find support and assistance there that is neither shallow or artificial. Part of the Church's mission of compassion must be to ensure that those most at risk of isolation are not forgotten.

Many young people and families are often absent from our communities not through disinterest but through a slow disconnection over time. We need to create spaces of engagement, but belonging must not be reduced to mere activities or social gatherings. It should lead young people and families into real participation in the Church's mission and to discover their identity as co-responsible disciples.

As an aside, when I met Pope Leo at the audience during the week I thanked him for the message of support we had received from him on Sunday last. I presented him with a copy of our Congress prayer and asked for his prayers on this important weekend for us. He promised that he would indeed remember us. So, we can be assured that he is aware of what we is happening here and that we have is spiritual assistance in what we are trying to do.

As I said earlier, the situation we are in today is similar to that which Saint Oliver Plunkett faced. The structures are fragile, the resources limited, and the task ahead is great. But God does not ask us to rebuild the Church alone. As St Paul reminds us in the second reading, "the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you." We must believe that the same Spirit that raised Lazarus from the tomb, the same Spirit that strengthened St. Oliver Plunkett in persecution, is alive and active in the Church today.

So let us not lose heart. Instead, let us renew our commitment to the mission that lies ahead. If we do so then generations to come will see that this was not a time of decline, but the beginning of a time of renewal and new life.

+Michael Router
Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh

Appendix 1.4: Message from Cardinal Mario Grech to delegates at Congress on Youth, Family and Faith and the Archdiocese of Armagh

My sisters and brothers in Christ,



It is a great joy for me to address you as you gather for this Congress and Synodal Assembly on Youth, Family and Faith. Even if only through this message, I feel spiritually united with you.

Your very gathering is already a sign of hope. Your presence proclaims something essential: that Christ is alive and that his Church is alive. The Church is alive because the Risen Lord continues to walk with his people. And the Church is young, not simply because of the age of her members, but because she is constantly renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

As the Spirit renews the face of the earth, so too he renews the life, the face of the Church. In this renewal, young people are not merely the future of the Church; they are an essential part of her present mission.

Your gathering takes place in a land whose Christian roots are deeply marked by the missionary witness of St Patrick. When St Patrick arrived on your shores, he came with a heart open to the people he was sent to serve. He did not bring the Gospel as a distant message, but as a living word capable of encountering the concrete reality of the people before him.

In a similar way, the People of God in Armagh continue today the same missionary journey, transmitting the Christian faith within the realities, questions, challenges, and hopes of the world today. The challenges we face today are certainly different from those of St Patrick's time. Yet the same Spirit is at work. This is the source of our courage, of our hope.

The Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church, helping us to discern how the Gospel can be proclaimed anew in every age with new vigour.

Your Congress takes place during a particularly significant moment for the life of the Church: the implementation phase of the synodal process following the Synod on Synodality. The entire People of God is now called to welcome the Final Document of the Synod and to translate its insights into concrete practices in the life of our communities.

As the Final Document reminds us, synodality is not simply a method or a series of meetings. It is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary, so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ.

In this sense, your gathering already reflects something deeply synodal. The journey of listening that has led to this Congress, a journey that began even before the Synod itself, is a beautiful example of what a synodal missionary Church is called to be.

Listening to what the Spirit is saying to the Church should always lead us towards action. Authentic listening is never passive. It moves us towards conversion, towards renewed commitment, towards mission.

Today, the Lord continues to send us into new mission territories. Among these, the digital world has become a particularly important space of encounter. The digital environment is not simply a tool for communication; it is a place where people live, search, question, and hope.

It is therefore a place where the Gospel must also be present, where the Gospel must be proclaimed with creativity, authenticity, and passion.

The recently published Final Report of Study Group Number Three offers valuable recommendations on mission in the digital world. It echoes the call of the last Synod, inviting local Churches to affirm digital culture as a real space for mission where true human relationships occur.

Appendix 1.4: Message from Cardinal Mario Grech to delegates at Congress on Youth, Family and Faith and the Archdiocese of Armagh

The priorities and proposals emerging from your process highlight several important areas of mission. In particular, your attention to young people and to families as primary places for the transmission of faith is deeply significant.

Families are the first communities where faith is lived, shared, and nurtured. Young people bring energy, questions, and a prophetic openness that help the Church remain attentive to the signs of the times.

Your Congress also takes place in the context of the tenth anniversary of the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. This document reminds us that families are not simply recipients of pastoral care; they are active subjects of evangelisation.

Dear young people, dear families, you are not only the future of the Church; you are protagonists of her mission today.

When people gather in faith, they experience something fundamental: the sense of belonging that flows from communion with Christ. The Final Document of the Synod reminds us that communion is the heart of the Church's life, the source from which mission flows.

Our unity is not based on strategies or structures. It is not something political, but is rooted in a living relationship with Christ, who gathers us together as one family, brothers and sisters.

Faith, in fact, is never a solitary experience. We encounter Christ within the community of believers. To grow as a synodal Church means becoming ever more aware that we belong to one another in Christ, walking together as the People of God.

For this reason, my sisters and brothers, I encourage you to live these days not only as a moment of reflection, but as a true experience of communion, listening, and missionary renewal.

May the Holy Spirit guide your conversations, inspire your creativity, and strengthen your commitment to proclaim the Gospel in the world today.

I assure you of my prayer for each one of you, and I wish you every success and every blessing during these days of your Congress.

May the Lord accompany you, my sisters and brothers. May the Lord make your journey fruitful for the life of the Church in your diocese and for the mission entrusted to us all.

Thank you.

+ Cardinal Mario Grech
Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/2j-g4detgrw?si=UbCC8bavoAuc30z1>

Appendix 1.5 Archbishop Eamon Martin: Summary of Closing Remarks, Sunday 22nd March 2026



At the close of the Congress, Archbishop Eamon Martin offered words of gratitude, encouragement and hope. His remarks gathered together the experience of the weekend and pointed the Archdiocese towards the work that now lies ahead.

He began by naming the joy and hope that the Congress had given him. While acknowledging the natural question of “where do we go from here?”, he expressed confidence that the Holy Spirit had been at work among the delegates and participants. The Congress was therefore not understood simply as an event to be concluded, but as a grace-filled moment in the life of the Archdiocese, opening onto a shared pathway for mission.

A central theme in the Archbishop’s reflection was the call to holiness. He recalled the universal call to holiness of all God’s people, so strongly emphasised since the Second Vatican Council, and linked this with the call to be missionary disciples. The witness of holy women and men, including Saint Carlo Acutis, Servant of God Claire Crockett, the saints and martyrs of the diocese, and Mary our Blessed Mother, was presented as an encouragement to say “yes” to God’s call in the concrete circumstances of our own lives.

The Archbishop placed particular emphasis on the lay apostolate. He identified the harnessing of the lay apostolate as central to the response and implementation of the Congress, especially in the evangelisation of culture. This was not only a question of helping people take part in Church structures, but of recognising the baptismal calling of all God’s people as they live and witness within families, workplaces, communities, public life and digital spaces.

He returned several times to the question of what the Church uniquely brings to the world today. His answer was rooted in the Gospel itself. The Church holds a precious treasure in the faith: the good news that Jesus Christ, our Saviour, came among us “for us and for our salvation.” The mission of the Church is to proclaim this good news, to draw others into friendship and life in Christ, and to communicate a reason for hope in a troubled world.

Family life was named as a key place of mission. Archbishop Eamon spoke of the family as the domestic Church, the “little Church,” and underlined the need to support families in the transmission of faith. He also highlighted the importance of catechesis and formation for all the baptised, especially across home, school and parish. In this context, he noted the need to translate the teachings of the catechism into modern digital spaces and to communicate the faith with confidence and accuracy.

The Congress was also described as pastoral in nature. Prayer and the Word of God had been at the heart of the weekend, and the Archbishop recalled the powerful testimonies that had been shared. These included the contributions of young people, families, clergy, religious and Church leaders, as well as the prayer of Brother Jean Marie and the words of encouragement offered by Archbishop John McDowell. Together, these witnesses helped the Congress to become not only a discussion about mission, but an experience of faith, prayer and communion.

Appendix 1.5 Archbishop Eamon Martin: Summary of Closing Remarks, Sunday 22nd March 2026

Looking ahead, Archbishop Eamon indicated his intention to receive the report of the Congress and to reflect on it over the summer, with a view to offering a pastoral message or letter to the whole Archdiocese. This would help to launch the recommendations of the Congress and invite the wider diocesan community to respond with joy and hope.

He also named the need to build an infrastructure at parish, pastoral area and diocesan level to support missionary endeavour in the years ahead. The implementation of the Congress will therefore require more than good will. It will require prayer, formation, shared responsibility, pastoral planning and a renewed confidence in the gifts already present among the people of God.

The closing message was one of gratitude and commissioning. The Congress has given the Archdiocese reason for joy and hope. The task now is to receive what has emerged, discern it carefully, and work together so that the faith entrusted to us may be rekindled and shared in the service of Christ's mission today.

+ Archbishop Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of All Ireland

Appendix 2.1 Jake Magill

Congress Opening, 20th March 2026

Good evening, everyone, I really appreciate your warm welcome.



My name is Jake Magill – I am a grandson, son, brother, and husband, and most importantly, like each of you, a beloved child of God by virtue of my Baptism.

“When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on earth?”
(Lk 18:8)

This question posed by Jesus resonated with me as I prepared to speak at this opening of our Diocesan Congress on Youth, Family and Faith. In actual fact, it is a question I have long pondered and a question which has fuelled my commitment to faith, Parish and Diocesan life.

“When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on earth?”

How would you answer this question? This is a question addressed to you and to me as we begin this Congress.

I believe Jesus is asking - “Will there be people of faith, taking their baptismal responsibility of handing on the faith seriously, supported by structures which facilitate this mission?”

Our presence here this evening is an unfolding of our Baptism. Who could have imagined that our Baptism would lead us to participating in this significant milestone in the life and mission of our local Church as we approach the 1600th anniversary of St. Patrick’s gift of faith to us? Our patron baptised countless people into the Body of Christ - we too have been baptised, we too are molecules of the mystical Body of Christ, but have we yet truly embraced the infinite possibilities of the grace communicated by this sacrament?

We are also here because we hear in the depths of our hearts, loudly or more quietly, the question of Jesus: “When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on earth?” and we take seriously our role in ensuring a positive response to this question within the context of our families, schools and communities. We realise that we have to keep moving in the direction the Spirit is leading and yet the change can seem painful as the faith community that we envisage in the future is likely to look so different to how it is has been experienced in the past.

My vocation is to hand on the gift of faith and to facilitate moments where the presence of God is recognised, the voice of God can be heard and the seed of faith is given the opportunity to grow. At the moment, I live this as a Religious Educator in Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry.

I am sustained in this mission by a personal relationship with a God who desires for me to recognise His life-giving and commissioning presence. This personal relationship has been nurtured in the context of my family – especially by my parents. From as early in life as I can remember, I recall my parents praying with my brother and I each night before bed. A simple and yet profound act reminding us that we are created out of love and for love by a God who is love.

This gift of faith has been nurtured in the context my Catholic education – at primary school, post-primary school and university where the pursuit of Truth was encouraged and ennobled – not in a narrow, reductive way but seeing everything within the context of our wider hunger for Truth which finds its completion in the reality of God.

Completing the Pope John Paul II and Papal Cross Awards convinced me that I have more to do than simply contribute to the mass in some way as a Minister of the Word or Eucharist as important as these roles are. The experience of these awards convinced me more and more that I am co-responsible for the life and mission of the Church – it is rooted in Sunday Mass, however, it is a mission much broader than this which requires more engagement than this. The witness of faithful priests, contemplative religious and generous lay people has been a constant source of encouragement on my journey of faith.

Feasting on the Gospel for almost ten years as an active member of a lay Lectio Divina community in Newry has deepened my relationship with God as we read His Word, recognise, respond, and rest in His presence.

“When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith in the Archdiocese of Armagh?” I believe wholeheartedly that our response to this question hinges on how we, as a community of faith, respond to the Spirit’s invitation in the here and now to hand on the faith to young people who tend to drift from the practise of the faith after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

As a post-primary school teacher, I see how many young people could live their lives comfortably without any recognition of or reference to God and the Church.

Young people are living much of their lives in a fast-paced and superficial digital culture. This shapes their entire lives, their sense of self, sense of morality, sense of purpose and mission. This culture leaves young people, who on the surface seem like they have it all, from social media to AI and Next Day delivery with Amazon Prime like the Rich Young Man who had it all according to the parameters for first century Jewish society.

Yet the Rich Young Man asked Jesus; “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mt 19:16). Similarly, I hear young people asking directly and indirectly, “what must I do to live a more meaningful life?” “What must I do to experience true joy?” “What must I do to have deeper connection with God and others?”

The good news is that young people desire something deeper, deeper connection with God and each other and a clearer sense of their mission in the Church and life. Handing on the faith requires an acknowledgement of this reality and a commitment to tapping into this desire for something “more”. More purposeful, more fulfilling, more life-giving. Our responsibility is to create a space of belonging, digital or in-person, where young people are accompanied and enabled to contemplate these deeper things as suggested by Christus Vivit.

I believe that re-proposing the Gospel, as recommended by *Evangelii Gaudium*, is at the heart of satisfying the longings of young people’s hearts for affirmation, purpose and mission. The young people who I teach relish the opportunity to engage in Lectio Divina. Why? As part of this prayer method, they are able to reflect on the concreteness of their life experience in a way which helps them to see God’s closeness. The richness of their reflections is always marvellous! Therefore, when a space is created, young people are open to contemplating God’s movement in their lives and welcome the realisation that they are not living in isolation but in the context of God’s wider dream for the world. My experience is that young people want to be helped to pray, they want to be supported to see the closeness of God. We are challenged to respond to this desire in our families, parishes and schools.

I must admit that many young people who I teach often see our Church as something structural beyond them rather than considering the truth that they are the lifeblood of the Church – the People of God– by Baptism as discussed by *Lumen Gentium*. I remember facilitating a Conversation in the Spirit with a group of teenagers about reimagining the Church today. The Conversation began by the young people sharing that the Pope needs to do this, the Bishop should be doing this, the Priest has to try this. All their ideas were good

ones – however – it required the activity of everyone else apart from themselves. As the Conversation developed, the young people listened more deeply to the movement of the Spirit and arrived at the conclusion that the change is not required externally but internally – the young people realised they were being invited to change their way of thinking and being, and to realise the depths of their Baptism, that is, to share responsibility for building communities focused on Jesus as “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6).

The good news is that young people are open to being led by the Holy Spirit who enables young people to hear, and more importantly, believe St. Paul’s teaching that “You are the Body of Christ” (1Cor12:27) and to live as the eyes, feet and hands of Jesus in their communities as encouraged by St. Teresa of Avila. Perhaps we have a lesson to learn from young people’s openness to Spirit-led change.

“When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on earth?” (Lk 18:8)

This Diocesan Congress is a significant part of our response to the Spirit’s invitation to respond affirmatively and positively to this question from Jesus. Answering this question positively depends on you and on me, on each of us gathered here and on all the baptised members of our faith communities.

It depends on responding with authenticity to the longings of young people who desire spaces for belonging, where they can grow in their relationship with God, and realise that Baptism is a continuous call to be co-responsible for the Church’s mission in society.

I believe. I hope. I trust that the faith will endure and flourish in new and more beautiful ways if we are open to realising the true potential of our Baptism, truly transforming our hearts, and going out passionately from the Galilee of our own local parish communities to proclaim the Gospel.

Jake Magill

Post Primary Religious Education Teacher, Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry

Appendix 2.2 Shannon Goodwin

Congress Opening, 20th March 2026

Good evening, everyone,

My name is Shannon Goodwin. I'm from Portadown and now living in Belfast where I work as Director of Campus Ministry at the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's.

My Own Journey of Faith



When I reflect on faith in young adults, I think first of my own journey. Like many people, faith for me did not come through one dramatic moment. It grew gradually through family, through school, through parish life, through the witness of others. And looking back now, I realise something important:

Faith was not passed on to me primarily through instruction. It was passed on through people.

Through people who lived their faith in a real and grounded way.

Through people who made space for me.

Through people who helped me to feel that I belonged.

That experience has shaped everything I now believe about how faith is nurtured — especially among young adults.

What I See at Queen's

For the past number of years, I have had the privilege of serving as Director of Campus Ministry at the Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen's University Belfast and I want to share a little of what I see there, because I think it offers a real sign of hope. Each week, we have over 150 students gathering in small-group Bible studies. These are not programmes led from the top down, they are student-led communities where young people open Scripture together, pray together, and try to make sense of their faith in the reality of their daily lives.

Our daily Mass is consistently well attended, and on Sundays, the chapel is often over capacity. Quite simply, we do not have enough space for the number of students who want to come. And perhaps most strikingly, we are seeing conversions.

Recently, six students were received into the Church. And this year again, a further group of students are preparing to enter the Church, young men and women, many of whom had little or no prior connection to Catholicism.

Some come from other Christian traditions.

Some have one Catholic parent but were never formed in the faith.

Some begin with no real background at all and yet, they are coming.

Which raises an important question: Why?

The Reality of Young Adults Today

There is often a narrative that young people are not interested in faith.

But that is not what I see. What I see instead is that many young adults feel that something is missing.

They are growing up in a world where so much feels temporary, trends change quickly, opinions shift constantly, relationships can feel fragile and in the middle of that, many are beginning to ask deeper questions:

What is my life for?

What will actually make me happy?

What is worth committing my life to?

The culture around them offers many answers, success, comfort, entertainment, but increasingly, young people are recognising that these things, on their own, are not enough. What they are really searching for is something lasting.

They are searching for truth.

They are searching for meaning.

And ultimately, they are searching for God.

Belonging Comes First

One of the clearest lessons from working with young adults is this: Before anything else, they are asking “Do I belong?” Belonging is often the doorway to faith.

At the Chaplaincy, many students first come through the door for very ordinary reasons, a cup of tea, a place to sit, a sense of community but when they encounter genuine welcome, something begins to change. Friendships form, conversations deepen and gradually, faith begins to grow.

This speaks directly to one of the key themes of this Congress. If we want to nurture faith, we must first create spaces of real belonging.

The Power of Witness and Peer Accompaniment

Another powerful reality we see is the importance of peer-to-peer witness. Very often, a student encounters Christ not first through a priest or chaplain, but through another student.

Someone invites them to Mass.

Someone brings them to a Bible study.

Someone walks with them in their questions.

And from that, something beautiful happens. One person grows in faith...and then helps another... and then another.

What we begin to see is something like a quiet multiplication of discipleship. And this is not new. This is how the Church has always grown, through relationships, through witness, through one person sharing faith with another.

Not a Weakened Faith, but a Deeper One

One of the most striking things I have learned is this:

Young people are not looking for a watered-down version of Christianity.

They are not looking for something vague or comfortable.

They want the truth.

They want to understand what the Church teaches.

They want to engage with the sacraments.

They want to learn how to pray.

They want their lives to have purpose.

And when the faith is presented clearly, confidently, and authentically, many of them respond with great generosity. Young adults today are capable of deep faith, of real commitment, and of genuine holiness.

The Wider Culture: Challenge and Opportunity

At the same time, we cannot ignore the wider culture shaping their lives. Digital media, for example, has transformed how young people communicate and relate. It offers connection but it can also deepen loneliness. It provides information, but not always wisdom and yet, it also offers an opportunity because the digital world is now one of the primary places where young people encounter ideas, ask questions, and search for meaning.

If we are serious about evangelisation, we cannot stand outside that space.

We are called to enter it... thoughtfully, creatively, and authentically, always leading people beyond the screen and into real encounter with Christ and with community.

The Ecosystem of Faith

Another key insight for us is that faith does not grow in isolation. It grows within an ecosystem of family, school, parish, and community. When these are connected, faith can flourish. When they become disconnected, it becomes much harder for young people to sustain their faith. No one part can do it alone.

Families remain the first place of witness.

Schools play a vital role in formation.

Parishes offer sacramental life and community.

And young adults themselves must be recognised not just as recipients, but as active participants in the life and mission of the Church.

Prayer: The Heart of It All

Beneath everything else, there is one reality that remains essential: Prayer.

Because ultimately, faith does not grow through ideas alone. It grows through encounter. At the Chaplaincy, some of the most powerful moments are often the simplest, time spent in silence, in Scripture, in the presence of the Eucharist. When young people encounter Christ in a real way, everything else begins to fall into place.

A Reason for Hope

Despite the challenges we face, I remain deeply hopeful. Because what I see every day tells a different story from the one we often hear. I see young people gathering to pray. I see them searching for truth. I see them entering the Church. I see them supporting one another in living the Gospel. And I see their lives being transformed. The desire for God has not disappeared. If anything, in a world that often feels uncertain and temporary, that desire is becoming clearer.

Conclusion

As we begin this Congress, we are being invited into something important. Not simply to discuss strategies but to rediscover our shared mission. Through Baptism, each of us has a role in nurturing faith. Each of us has a part to play in creating communities where young people can belong, can grow, and can encounter Christ. Young adults do not need a perfect Church, but they do need a Church that is real.

A Church that welcomes.

A Church that listens.

A Church that believes in the power of the Gospel...

Because when young people encounter the real Christ, not a reduced version, but the living Christ, they respond and when that happens, the future of the Church becomes not something to fear... but something to hope for. Thank you.

Shannon Goodwin

Director of Campus Ministry, Catholic Chaplaincy at Queens University Belfast

A Ard Easpag, Eamonn, Easpon Micahel agus Pobal De Uilig, Good Morning

Introduction



Lenten and Penance - Cork man and Jesuit.
So nicer things to come for the rest of the day.

I want to pause for a moment and really look at this gathering. Wow. It is truly historic, and it is an achievement worth recognising.

Just imagine - even a few years ago - if a group of lay people and a few clergy had gathered in a hotel in Armagh to discern what the Lord might be asking of the Church, and then to make recommendations to the Archbishop... well, most of us would have been in danger of excommunication!

And yet today, here we are - the Church across the world responding to Pope Francis’ call to walk together, to journey in faith, and to live synodality. What a grace!

While acknowledging the achievement of this process to date, and all the energy and time that has been poured in by you, parishioners and organisers, I want to encourage us to keep broadening the horizon, to remain super-ambitious.

(A Cork joke)

A Cork man arrives at the Munster Council meeting...
“That’s the problem,” he says,
“No ambition!”

Synodality: Walking With God and With One Another

Synodality is a journey, it is a walking-with.

Perhaps it is good to recall the words of the Prophet Micah:

*“What does the Lord require of you?
To act justly, to love faithfulness,
and to walk humbly with your God.”*

To walk with each other, and with God.

Synodality is not something new we have invented. It is the recovery of the ancient way of being Church, rediscovered for our times. In fact ‘walking with’ is constituent of our story-it is in walking with, that we encounter God and a prerequisite for meeting our God in Stillness... Walk- be still- Walk...

And it will take decades, if not centuries, for us as Church to grow into the fullness of what the Holy Spirit is inviting us to become through our baptismal vocation.

A vital part of this renewal, this walking humbly with our God, is the call to walk alongside those who are not at the centre: those on the margins of society and on the margins of our concern.

And in some places, yes, we must unlearn attitudes that have contributed, sometimes quietly, sometimes unintentionally, to marginalisation and exclusion.

Not to Discourage - But to Awaken Courage

I do not say any of this to discourage you; quite the opposite. I want to unleash enthusiasm for the potential of synodality to renew in us the attitudes, practices, and confidence of the early Church, those first disciples in Acts 17 who were once accused of:

“Turning the world upside down.”

Having read the listening exercises and the proposals, I must also say the risk of us being accused of “turning the world upside down” at the moment seems... rather slim!

We are hardly in danger of a fixed penalty fine!!!... let alone imprisonment... for threatening the unjust structures of our world.

And yet that is our vocation.

Followers of Jesus are called to seek first the Kingdom of God, to disturb what must be disturbed, and to heal what must be healed.

To the young people here, I say with particular hope:

Dream big. Dream wide. Do not settle for holy bubbles of the like-minded.

Go to the far edges, and be transformed, and transform.

A Wounded World: Where the Gospel Must Walk

For much of the past ten years, I have accompanied people who are forcibly displaced. Forced migration is one of the clearest reminders of structural sin, of the brokenness of our world.

As we set out on the synodal pathway let us Consider a few facts:

Wars and Conflict

- Middle East
- Ukraine
- Myanmar
- Sudan.

Depending on how you define it. as of this month across the world there are between 32 and 46 active armed conflicts worldwide. God its great time to be an arms dealer!

Global poverty

According to revised UN poverty estimates:

- 808 million people will live in extreme poverty in 2025 (using the updated \$3/day line) [[fra.europa.eu](#)].
- That is 9.9% of humanity—nearly 1 in 10 people [[fra.europa.eu](#)].

Child mortality

A UN report released 17 March 2026 shows:

- 4.9 million children under five died in 2024, including 2.3 million newborns [[news.un.org](#)].
- Child mortality rates are rising for the first time in 25 years [[time.com](#)]

The triple planetary crisis

The UN Environment Programme warns that humanity now faces a triple planetary crisis:

- Climate change
- Biodiversity loss
- Pollution

All three are accelerating, and scientists warn that the very fabric of life on Earth is under threat, a crisis driven by human choices, requiring courageous and urgent action.

Realities Close to Home

Let us also consider realities closer to home.

I think of our young neighbour in Churchill Park who calls to our door... and who is in an out of Maghaberry Prison. His crimes are minor. his heartbreak and his trauma are severe and masked by the diseases of addiction and mental health. I know from the chaplains that our prisons are predominantly incarnating those with addiction and mental health problems which go unaddressed and problem made worse.

And consider the situation of Travellers in Ireland:

- 96% of Travellers are at risk of poverty (general population: 12%) [wri.org].
- 97% of Traveller children are at risk of poverty (general: 15%) [wri.org].
- 40% live in severe material deprivation (general: 4%) [wri.org].
- Traveller men live 11 years less, and Traveller women 8 years less, than the general population [wwf.panda.org]

This is not abstract, not the other side of the world this is here. And as a newcomer to Northern Ireland, I am trying to understand more and more the reality of a divided society and a much-needed mission of reconciliation and budding social cohesion.

This is Not ‘My Gospel’ (Fr Tony’s) - This Is THE GOSPEL

In case anyone thinks by inviting us to consider and to listen to these global realities that I am offering merely my own personal reading of the Gospel or a private view of how we are to be Church, let me say clearly:

I am simply echoing the call of the Church in our time. This is the vision of Vatican II, and of the Magisterium that flows from it for several decades now.

We need only recall the opening words of *Gaudium et Spes*:

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially the poor and those who suffer, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.”

This is the Church’s self-understanding.

This is who we are.

A people who listen to the cries of humanity,
a people who walk with Christ,
and a people who walk with the world God so loves.

I want to give you three stories from what I have experienced that might give ideas and examples of how we can be Church in the ways I am hinting at:

The Story of John the Baptist School, Portadown

John the Baptist School in Portadown is a community where diversity is welcomed and celebrated. Today, 43% of students have English as an Additional Language, and 23 nationalities are represented. Staff speak of their families with warmth and inclusive language - aware that many of us, in different ways, come “from elsewhere.”

The school also faces significant pastoral challenges. Many students live with high levels of poverty, arriving without a hot breakfast or carrying the effects of childhood adversity and trauma. These realities shape the compassion and commitment of the school’s mission.

Leadership Rooted in Care

Under Noella’s creative and attentive leadership, the school has responded with practical and imaginative supports, academic, emotional, cultural, and even basic needs. At one point, staff realised a child simply needed a bed in order to thrive. And they provided one.

Learning From Culture and Faith

The team has taken time to understand the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of their pupils, leading to joyful school-wide celebrations of different cultural and religious festivals. This has built understanding, belonging, and shared joy.

Ahead of the Wider Society

While wider society can struggle to adapt to Ireland’s growing cultural mix, the school quietly models what inclusion looks like in practice: openness, respect, and genuine welcome.

Enriched by Diversity

Noella often reflects that diversity has not only helped students flourish—it has transformed the staff. She and her team have, in her words, become better human beings and better disciples by embracing the richness of the children they serve.

The story of South Sudan and Portadown

They embraced the cause

Jeremiah and Rebecca- and their three children – when they went to Mass they felt the power of the Eucharist, linking them with the Body of Christ in Portadown.

The people gained a sense of belonging and purpose and joy in giving and in collective action.

The Story of Alaman

Story of Teeth

Buying Clothes – Voucher

I thank God - and every night I pray for you and your mother...

“I hope there will be noise”

Pope Francis: World Youth Day in Rio

“Let me tell you what I hope will be the outcome of World Youth Day: I hope there will be noise. Here there will be noise, I’m quite sure. Here in Rio, there will be plenty of noise, no doubt about that.

But I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses, I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets.”

“I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves. The parishes, the schools, the institutions are made for going out ...”

May the bishops and priests forgive me if some of you create a bit of confusion afterwards. That’s my advice. Thanks for whatever you can do.”

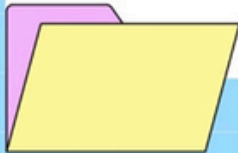
Fr. Tony O’Riordan SJ



Inclusion, Belonging and Faith

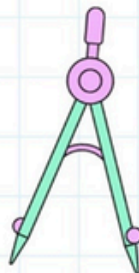
A reflection from Rathore School

Caroline Currie: Principal



Rathore School

- Special school based in Newry
- Caters for 218 children aged 4 – 19 years old
- Children with severe and profound learning difficulties
- Complex social, emotional, behavioural, medical needs
- 75% of pupils are Autistic
- Number of children with co-occurring diagnoses



Lived Experience of Young People with Additional Needs

Lived realities and systems - Young people and families navigate healthcare, education, social services and community groups—often juggling advocacy, care and daily life. Resilience grows when support networks are present.

Parish inclusion and belonging - In parish life, attentiveness and relational warmth can flourish when sensory, cognitive and communication differences are understood and welcomed.

What helps young people flourish – Listening, appropriate adaptations and genuine belonging affirm each person’s identity—enabling joy, perseverance and spiritual sensitivity that enrich the whole community.

Belonging and Inclusion in Parish Life

Experiences of Welcome
Being greeted by name, gentle accommodations during Mass and open invitations to parish celebrations build trust and ease. Cross community – clergy invited to events in school – including Harvest Services and assemblies.

Hidden Barriers
Uncertainty about behaviours, limited sensory-friendly spaces and low awareness of diverse communication can erode belonging. Events heavily supported by staff teams. Numerous visits to places of worship prior to ceremony.

Inclusive Leadership in Newry
With Rathore School’s community ties, leaders adapt sacramental prep and offer flexible liturgy participation.

Community Impact
When belonging is nurtured, families feel grounded; participation grows, deepening compassion and shared discipleship. We open our school throughout the year to the area welcoming people to celebrate Christmas and the end of year with us.

Challenges and Barriers to Parish Participation

Practical access

Physical inaccessibility, sensory overstimulation and lack of quiet or breakout spaces. Smaller groupings/ inhouse where and when necessary/ use of rooms and spaces – even conducting ceremonies and blessings in the car park on occasions!

Communication barriers

Materials and programs not adapted for cognitive or communication differences. Our local priest willing to adapt and use visuals and Makaton to support our pupils.

Cultural assumptions

Well-intentioned comments, limited understanding of autism and assumptions that deter participation – all family members invited to services to support immediate family.

Newry/Rathore context

Transitions—entry, crowds, and rituals—are challenging without preparation and support.

Emotional factors

Past negative experiences reduce confidence and increase self-exclusion.

What helps

Intentional planning, ongoing dialogue and reshaping approaches in partnership with families. Preparation is key!



Welcoming and Accompanying Families in the Church

Hospitality, Training, and Flexibility

Equip clergy, volunteers and teams to understand sensory, behavioural and communication differences so responses during liturgy and events are compassionate and informed.

Adaptable Spaces and Pathways

Offer quiet zones and sensory-friendly services. Create flexible sacramental pathways and celebrate milestones in ways that suit each child's capacities.

Presence, Listening, and Collaboration

Partner with schools and families to ground initiatives in lived realities. Accompany through attentive presence, open communication and advocacy for inclusion.



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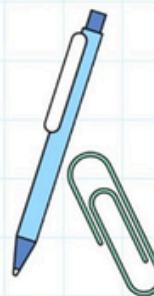
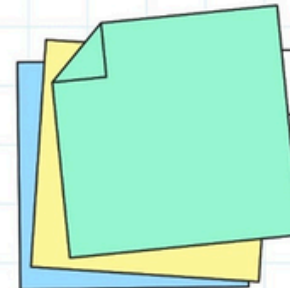
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Gifts of Young People with Additional Needs



Authenticity and Presence

Honest emotion and attentive presence invite deeper compassion and help the parish notice the quiet movements of the Spirit.

Joy in Shared Worship

From sensory-friendly prayer to spontaneous delight in music, their participation brings sensitivity, openness, and connection.

Expanding Parish Imagination

They teach the community to slow down, listen differently and recognise Christ in unexpected forms—reshaping parish life.



Creating Spaces Where Gifts Can Flourish

Sensory-aware worship practices

Use softer lighting, reduced noise, visual supports and movement options so children can regulate and engage at their own pace.

Relational bridges with Rathore School

Connect youth groups with pupils to build friendships beyond church events—dismantling misconceptions and growing mutual understanding.

Invite authentic participation

Create roles in music, simple ministries, storytelling, or art—and celebrate contributions publicly to affirm every gift.

Co-design inclusive initiatives

Form teams of parents, educators and volunteers to partner with leaders—shifting from accommodation to genuine partnership.





**Let the little children come to me,
and do not hinder them, for the
kingdom of God belongs to such as
these.**

Thank you for listening!



Appendix 3: QR Codes to Video and Photo Archive

1. Photos from the Congress:



PHOTOS FROM THE CONGRESS



<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17lqKA2bqGQZcIg-hmgP5clmQiZoSy9He?usp=sharing>

2. Video Memories from the Congress:



VIDEOS FROM THE CONGRESS



<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvU2KLnY7W5Owj0fjNXCKFrlyQ2D4StxQ&si=5VGYRsOVnq8YuXGa>

3. Voices from the Congress (Young Adult Digital Team):



VOICES FROM THE CONGRESS



https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1U2KLnY7W50TVIHjpx_I0ttoTNYB_GPb&si=I5JjrfzIMJhOz1

