GO, REBUILD MY CHURCH

Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Eamon Martin to the People of the Archdiocese of Armagh

“Go, Rebuild My Church”

Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Eamon Martin to the People of the Archdiocese of Armagh

To be read at all Masses in the Archdiocese of Armagh on the weekend of 3rd–4th October 2026

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

More than eight hundred years ago, a young Francis of Assisi knelt in prayer before the Cross of San Damiano and heard Christ calling him: “Go, rebuild my Church.”

At first St Francis thought Christ was asking him to repair the small, crumbling church in which he was praying. In time, however, he came to see that Christ was calling him to something much deeper. The call was for him to help renew the Church through a radical and personal commitment to peace, simplicity, and love for the poor.

Those words, “Go, rebuild my Church”, speak powerfully to the Archdiocese of Armagh today. They invite us to ask ourselves, as individuals, families, parishes and Church: What is Christ calling us to become, here and now?

This exact question lay at the heart of our Diocesan Congress in March 2026 on Youth, Family and Faith. During the months of listening which preceded it, and throughout the Congress weekend itself, young people, families, clergy and religious, teachers and parishioners spoke with honesty about faith and belonging; prayer and family life; faith formation; liturgy; communication; and the challenges to faith and belief that we share today.

Through prayer, conversation, listening and silence, the Holy Spirit was at work among us. The presence of so many young people at the Congress enlivened us to imagine more boldly the kind of vibrant and missionary Church that Christ is calling us to become here in the Archdiocese of Armagh.

That call is urgent today in a world marked by aggression and war, loneliness and division, and by growing pressures on family and community life. Rapid technological change and artificial intelligence bring new possibilities, but they also raise deeper questions about what it means to be truly human, and how we can find lasting happiness through conversion and by living in communion with Christ and one another.

Pope Leo XIV speaks (in Magnifica Humanitas) of an age marked by “speed and fragmentation.” He reminds us that it is Christ who gathers the scattered fragments of our lives, drawing us into communion. This, I believe, takes us to the heart of what renewal means for us in the Church. We are not being asked simply to devise new programmes or to maintain existing structures, but, like young St Francis, we are being invited to encounter Jesus Christ, who heals what has been wounded, gathers what has become scattered and sends us out to be a people of hope, reconciliation and mission.

We begin again from Christ.

At the opening of our Congress, I reflected on the words of Jesus to Simon Peter: “Put out into the deep.” Peter was tired and discouraged. He had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Yet, because Christ asked him, he trusted enough to begin again.

We too know something of tiredness and uncertainty in the Church; we know the hurts and deep wounds in need of healing. We see the changing patterns of family life, the growing distance between faith and contemporary culture, fewer vocations, and the declining numbers attending Mass and receiving the sacraments.

But despite these real challenges, Christ is calling the Church in Ireland to be once more a missionary Church, bringing the Hope and Joy of the Gospel into the brokenness and emptiness of our world.

Through Baptism and Confirmation, each of us is called and sent out. The Holy Spirit is already at work, inspiring people - including gifted young people - in all our parishes, to play their part. The renewal and “rebuilding” of our Church is the shared responsibility of the whole People of God here in the Archdiocese of Armagh. To assist this journey of Hope and renewal, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and Congress Team have been discerning the fruits of our Congress in March and have identified five missionary pathways to guide our next steps:

1. To deepen our encounter with Christ and to renew prayer in our homes, parishes and personal lives;

2. To strengthen formation for intentional and missionary discipleship, assisting children, young people and adults to know their faith and proclaim it with confidence, bringing their gifts to help “transform the world from within”;

3. To renew our accompaniment of young people and families, strengthening cooperation between homes, parishes and schools to create spaces and opportunities where faith can be inspired, shared and deepened;

4. To renew how we celebrate parish liturgy, the sacraments, and pray together, welcoming and encouraging others to be drawn more deeply into relationship and belonging with Christ and the Church;

5. To enhance communication, digital mission, evangelisation and invitation, reaching out and sharing the Gospel, opening new doors to encounter.

In the coming days, we will send further details about pastoral activities and concrete actions to help parishes and other organisations get started along the five missionary pathways. In November and February, we hope to organise regional gatherings to discuss your ideas about progressing the recommendations of the March Congress and what supports we might need to bring the five pathways to life.

It is important that we listen carefully to our different local realities, recognise the gifts already among us, support one another across parish boundaries, and identify realistic actions that will help us to bring the vision of the Congress to life.

St Francis began by rebuilding a small chapel. In time he discovered that Christ was asking him to give his heart, his life and his whole self to the mission of living the Gospel anew. Christ is asking the same of us today.

In a fragmented world, Christ gathers.
In a weary Church, Christ calls us: “Go, rebuild my Church.”

May Saint Francis of Assisi pray for us.
May Saint Patrick, Saint Brigid, Saint Malachy and Saint Oliver Plunkett strengthen us for mission.
May Mary, our Mother, teach us to say “yes” to the Lord.
And may the Holy Spirit, who has already stirred such hope and energy among us, lead us together with courage, wisdom and joy.

With every blessing and assurance of my prayers,

+ Eamon Martin

Eamon Martin

Archbishop of Armagh
Primate of All Ireland