



OSSORY DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN

DIOCESE OF OSSORY

Our vision for a Diocesan Pastoral Plan

The Diocese of Ossory is the local expression of the universal Church and shares in the mission of Jesus who came on earth to proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom. Jesus came to let people know that they are loved by God and to show them how to respond to that love by living in accordance with the Gospel. Participation in the mission of Jesus challenges the Diocese to enable all its members to live the faith they profess.

Ossory has always had a rich tradition of vibrant local groups working throughout the diocese. These groups consist of clergy, religious and lay people working together to bring the Good News of the Gospel to all through many and varied ministries.

A pastoral plan for Ossory seeks to invite all these groups to come on a journey together into a new era of change in the Church. It is our hope that the passion and commitment shown in the diocese can continue to grow under this new pastoral plan and that the joy that people experience in their own parishes can be celebrated and form part of a plan for the whole diocese.

In these difficult times that we find ourselves in as Church, it may be hard for people and indeed diocesan groups, to always feel joy in their work. The pressure of success and the expectation to succeed in everything weighs heavy on diocesan work. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, encourages us not to despair, and lose hope, because even in the small things that we do, 'joy is present'.¹ In *Evangelii Gaudium* he also challenges us to recover the original freshness of the Gospel in order to remember the joy that comes from evangelising. So it is with this in mind that we endeavour to plan together as a diocese and create a pastoral plan that awakens the memory of the joy of the Gospel in people and parishes.

¹ *Evangelii Gaudium, The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*; p. 11.

Our remit is echoed in the words of Jesus, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations'.² This brings alive Pope Francis' words that we need to go forth out of our comfort zone and get involved in people's lives.³ Therefore it is our aim that this diocesan pastoral plan incorporate and support all existing work being done as well as identify new avenues in which to develop.

As a community, we need to work together to search for the means of exploring these new avenues and not be put off by possible failure, disagreements or criticism. Diocesan groups need to be part of something if they are to be sustained into the future. Pope Francis says that life weakens in isolation, therefore placing great importance on co-operation within community.⁴

Our model for community can be seen in St. Paul writing to the Corinthians when he speaks about the gifts bestowed on members of a Christian community. Every gift comes from the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12:14), in service of the same Lord (12:5), and is ordered to the welfare of the whole body of believers (12:12-26).⁵ Therefore, each member of the diocese is asked to share and join together in their efforts to proclaim the Gospel. Most important of all, these efforts are not to divide us, as Paul warns, but that as a community we can work together in the ongoing task of realising our mission.

The Diocesan Pastoral Plan is not asking people to do something new but to be part of something new, a new way of being a community, 'united' in the one mission to bring new life to the diocese. The Diocesan Pastoral Plan is asking us to accept that the future shape of the Church in Ossory is in our hands, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a new Pentecost. It is asking us to take ownership of that task which is ours through our Baptism. It is inviting us to be creatively and collaboratively involved in this mission.

² Matthew 28: 19

³ *Evangelii Gaudium*; p.19.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 13.

⁵ Pascuzzi Maria A., *First and Second Corinthians*, Liturgical Press, Minnesota: 2005; p.21

THE STRANDS OF THE PLAN

1. Co - Responsibility for the Mission (Working Together)

"We care, that is why we are here"
(Listening Sessions, 2010).

GOAL: Structural Renewal at diocesan level to strengthen the relationship between leadership in the diocese and diocesan bodies. This would make the co-responsibility of all, clergy, religious, lay men and women, a reality. It is in the context of co-responsibility that vocations to priesthood and consecrated life will be specifically promoted.

2. Reimagine Parish Leadership in Light of Today's Reality

"Parish Areas/Clustering...this needs to be addressed" (Pastoral Councils Evaluation, 2013).

GOAL: A new Parish Leadership Strategy that would involve preparing parishes for joining with other parishes. Talking and listening to priests and people in all parishes. Consulting parishioners about how best to plan for the joinings. Designing a new way of working for the newly grouped parishes.

3. Pastoral Care of Priests

People expressed very strongly their appreciation for the work of their local priests. (Listening Sessions 2010)

GOAL: Acknowledging the unique contribution that priests make and have made to the faith life of the Diocese, the goal is to identify and promote what best supports them at every stage of their life and ministry.

4. Liturgy

"Our faith is in God, Jesus, the sacraments and prayer; this hasn't changed one bit"
(Listening Sessions, 2010).

GOAL: To re-vitalise the celebration of Sunday Eucharist & the liturgies of Advent, Lent, Easter & Christmas as participative, meaningful and spiritually nourishing.

5. Young People

"There needs to be a renewed commitment to resource and fund youth ministry in the Diocese" (Listening Sessions, 2010).

GOAL: To develop a definite strategy for Youth Faith Development at diocesan level coordinating the initiatives already in place.

6. Child Safeguarding

"Specifically in relation to [child] abuse it was stated that every child has a right to be listened to and that every person has a right to be heard" (Listening Sessions, 2010).

GOAL: To provide support for the area of Child Safeguarding at Diocesan level by continuing to develop the area of child safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure best practice in this area.

7. Communication

"People would like to see a more pro-active engagement with the media from the Church at national and diocesan level"
(Listening Sessions, 2010).

GOAL: Pro-active engagement with the local media by establishing good links with all forms of local media - newspaper, radio, diocesan web site etc.

8. Outreach

"People long for a Church that is humble, simple and faithful to the message of Jesus"
(Listening Sessions, 2010).

GOAL: To develop the parish's vocation of witness in the wider society of Justice, Peace and Care for the Earth.

9. Nourishing Faith

"Adult Faith Development Group highly commended" (Pastoral Councils Evaluation, 2013).

GOAL: To support the work of Faith Renewal in the diocese, developing and enhancing what is already being done. To complement and support the work of religious education and faith formation of children and young people.



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