

## INTRODUCTION

When he arrived as Bishop of East Anglia in March 2003, Bishop Michael immediately set about a series of consultations about what were perceived to be the key priorities for our diocese over the next few years. On 26<sup>th</sup> March 2003, just a week after his ordination, the Diocesan College of Consultors (the seven Deans and five other priests), rooted in their long and varied experience of the diocese, gave the following ten priorities, all within the setting of the Lord's call to grow together in holiness, in faith and in love:

- the evangelisation of East Anglia: where is the Catholic Church in all this?
- becoming more outward looking (e.g. through overseas links)
- the formation of lay people for fuller participation and collaborative ministry, partly to help us face an imminent future with fewer priests, but much more importantly to enable lay people to play their full part in the life and mission of the Church
- better catechesis and adult education
- a review of parish, deanery and diocesan structures
- the welfare and ongoing formation of our priests and deacons
- a more pro-active approach to vocations promotion, with greater focus in both parish and school
- a renewed diocesan youth service, with a higher profile given to young people
- moving towards financial stability in order to resource our future together
- a review of the Schools Commission and Religious Education Commission

The gathering of fifty of our priests and deacons in Merville in June 2003 echoed these priorities, and added some of their own.

- greater focus on spiritual renewal: the call to conversion, holiness and prayer
- a greater sense of mission
- realistic planning for our future together with fewer priests
- recognising the gifts of the laity, and lay formation leading to serious lay ministry and service
- a structured adult education programme
- viable and sustainable parish, deanery and diocesan structures
- more coordination and sharing of resources between parishes, and greater cooperation among priests
- a re-think of city/town centre ministries
- a much better sense of being a single diocesan family
- more focus on the Cathedral as the Mother Church of our diocese
- young people to take their proper place
- sharing best practice among parishes and dioceses
- better care for the clergy from 'ordination to the grave', and better ongoing formation

These same priorities arose again and again in discussions among lay people and clergy at parish, deanery and diocesan level.

The clergy meeting in Merville also asked that we dispel the attitude of 'something will happen one day.' There has been a growing sense over the last year that we no longer have the luxury of being able to sit back and wait a little longer.

The March 2003 meeting of the College of Consultors agreed a new diocesan consultation process, echoing Bishop Alan Clark's 1988 Pastoral Plan ("Deepening and Widening our Faith") and taking up where Bishop Peter Smith's later "Sowing the Seed" had left off. This new diocesan process came to be called "Forward and Outward Together".

For twelve months, from May 2003 until May 2004, every parish and deanery has been involved in numerous discussions. There were also many individual responses. A lot of people gave much time to the process. Over 1,500 people were involved in the first phase of consultations, based on the bishop's paper "Forward & Outward Together" and the accompanying "Points to Ponder". These responses led to two further papers for the second phase: "Working Together" and "Towards New Structures".

There have also been parallel consultations and meetings at diocesan level on the age for First Communion and Confirmation, our work with Young People, Justice and Peace, Disability Awareness, and Marriage and Family Life ('Listening 2004'), as well as with our religious communities. Some of our Diocesan Commissions have also given time to exploring the best way forward. Alongside this, Fr David Bagstaff spent some of his sabbatical exploring how similar dioceses do things in the United States and here in England. The main results of our diocesan process are now brought together in this Diocesan Pastoral Plan. We are most grateful to all who have contributed in any way.

A draft version of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan was presented for discussion to a joint meeting of the parish priests of the diocese and the Council of Priests on 1st July 2004. A large majority (86%) approved the document as something on which we could move forward together; another 10% gave qualified approval; 4% were unhappy to move forward in this way. A few small revisions were made, and Bishop Michael has now endorsed this Diocesan Pastoral Plan as the policy for our whole diocesan family and its parishes.

No such plan is of use unless it is practical and realistic, and is followed up carefully. Although a range of views were expressed in parish, deanery and individual responses to 'Forward and Outward Together', we can only move realistically into the future on the basis of Catholic teaching and current Catholic discipline. People will continue to ask challenging questions, and these need to be heard and answered, but a Bishop can only lead his diocese within the fullness of the Catholic tradition, united in full communion with the Holy Father and his brother bishops, and drawing his inspiration especially from the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

**The Pastoral Plan is divided into two parts.**

## **PART 1: General Pastoral Plan**

This covers a range of diocesan policies and recommendations, rooted in the initial round of discussions for 'Forward & Outward Together' and responses to the document 'Working Together'.

**There are three categories of statements:**

1. **Policies** to be implemented everywhere across the diocese.
2. **Recommendations** to be given full consideration in each parish and deanery.
3. **Points for further consideration** by each parish and deanery, and the diocese.

The plan should be used as a check-list by priests and people together as they present pastoral plans for the future of parishes, clusters of parishes, deaneries and the whole diocese. Parish and Deanery Councils of different kinds should use it as an agenda for their ongoing work. It will also be used as a basis for the Bishop's visitation of parishes.

## **PART 2: Structural Changes**

This covers decisions concerning structural changes regarding individual parishes, clustering of parishes and deaneries, some to be implemented immediately, others to be implemented gradually as appropriate.

This Plan is not intended to be the last word on anything. It is open to ongoing and periodic review. As the Second Vatican Council reminded us, the Church is in need of continual renewal. Some things will not work. Other better ideas will come to light. This Pastoral Plan will be presented for radical review by the whole diocese in 2009, but there needs to be flexibility between now and then. Such a plan can only be provisional. Our situation may change for better or worse. We need continuity with our past; we need to consolidate all the good that we already have; but we are also a pilgrim people, and we need to keep moving 'Forward and Outward Together' if we are truly to be the Church of Jesus Christ.

**"People want more church - not less"**

*(St Mary's parish, Ipswich)*

The motto of the Synod of Churches in the Holy Land, presenting its General Pastoral Plan in 2000, sums up in three phrases all that our own pastoral plan seeks to enable and encourage:

- **Believing in Christ**
- **Participating in the Church**
- **Witnessing in Society**

We need to hold together those three callings if we are to be truly the Church in East Anglia. All three belong together, and we cannot truly have one without the other.

## **CALLED TO HOLINESS**

Much in this pastoral plan concerns new ways of doing things, new structures for our future, and simply sharing good practice with one another. But there is no point to any of this unless it serves our fundamental vocation from God: the call to holiness, the call to perfect love of God and one another. Our prayer for this diocese and our parishes is that the Holy Spirit will renew us in love, and set us on fire so that others can catch fire from us.

Our personal lives, our families and homes, our schools and parish communities, are 'holy ground' where we encounter the transforming presence of the Living God. We are called to be like the burning bush Moses was drawn to in the desert: we should be people on fire with God's love within us, so that others will be attracted towards us and meet God himself.

But holiness is never a private affair. It is deeply personal, but never private. We are called to love God with all our being, and to love one another as Jesus has loved us. Growing together in loving community is essential to being truly holy. We are called to be beacons of holiness - in our personal lives and in our communion with each other.

We are all called to turn our lives away from sin and towards the Risen Lord. Only God, 'the fountain of all holiness', can make us holy, and it is always by the power of his love - the Holy Spirit - that he renews and transforms us from within.

As Jesus changed the water into wine at Cana for the wedding guests to drink, so he seeks to transform our lives by his Holy Spirit so that the spiritual thirst of others may be quenched. Our personal growth in holiness is a gift for others, and that of others a gift of God to us.

We are not asked to do all this on our own. Above all, Christ is with us. Without Christ we can do nothing. We are totally dependent on his free gift of grace, the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the love which God pours into our hearts

But also, our Diocese of East Anglia today and in the years ahead is not alone. We are united in full communion with the Catholic Church throughout the world, led and inspired by the ministry of the Holy Father and his brother bishops. Most of the challenges we face we share with the other dioceses in the United Kingdom, and with much of the western world. We can support and help each other. Our diocese is now united in special friendship with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Cambodian Diocese of Battambang. Throughout our own pastoral plan, we include quotations from the General Pastoral Plan of the Holy Land, which flowed from their Synod in 2000. Our problems and challenges are not unique, and we can learn much from our twin dioceses in the Holy Land and Cambodia. And we are in their prayers. We are also deeply united through our baptism with all the other Christians of East Anglia, and there are many ways in which we can grow together in faith and witness.

Nor are we simply united with the Church of today. We are supported and inspired by all those who have gone before us in East Anglia, by centuries of faithful Christians who have lived the Gospel message and sometimes given their life for their Christian and Catholic faith. We think especially of St Felix who came from Gaul in 630 to work for the conversion of the East Angles: we are all called, like him, to preach the Good News to the people of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. We are united with all the saints from East Anglia, with St Etheldreda and St Edmund, Saints Botolph, Fursey, Walstan and Withburga, and with the Blessed Martyrs of East Anglia who gave their lives for the Catholic Church. We can be sure that St Henry Morse, St Robert Southwell and St Henry Walpole, all born in Norfolk, will keep us in their prayers. And above all, of course, our diocesan family is commended to the prayers of Our Lady of Walsingham, the Christ-Bearer and God-Bearer: we pray that our personal, parish and diocesan lives will be so overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and so full of the mysterious presence of Christ that we, like Mary, may bring Christ himself to all the people of East Anglia. That is our mission, that is our calling, that is our sacred service to our world.

## **A COMMUNITY OF WELCOME**

Nearly all parish responses highlighted the need to become more welcoming communities. This is one of the main ways we will spread the Good News of Jesus together: by becoming visible beacons of God's light, communities full of the joyful and welcoming love of the Risen Lord. Other people will be drawn towards our parish life and worship, and encounter there the presence of Christ.

The 'gift of community' lies at the heart of God's plan for humanity. The Lord came to 'gather together the scattered children of God', and unity is central to a truly Catholic understanding of the 'salvation' Christ came to bring. Only if we are truly united with each other can we be a credible sign to the world of the Good News of Jesus Christ. 'Being together' and 'going forth', Community and Mission, belong inseparably together.

God our Father,  
we rejoice in the faith that draws us together,  
aware that selfishness can drive us apart.  
Let your encouragement be our constant strength.  
Keep us one in the love that has sealed our lives,  
and help us to live as one family  
the gospel we profess.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
*Roman Missal: alternative opening prayer for the  
11th Sunday of the Year.*

## **A COMMUNITY OF MISSION**

It is essential that we become truly welcoming communities, open to all and united in faith and in love. But if our only concern is the creation of close-knit worshipping communities, we will never be fully the Church of Jesus Christ. The Risen Lord calls us together, and binds us together, so that we can go forth together. As Pope Paul VI reminded us so powerfully, "Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity" (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 14). The word 'evangelise' comes from the Greek words for 'good news'. The Church is called to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. That is true for our diocese, and it is also true for every parish. The call to proclaim the Gospel to the world, to be a radiant witness to everyone of Christ himself, is the heart of what it means to be a parish.

Our diocese as a whole, and each and every parish, should seek to become a beacon community - or a modern day 'burning bush' - to which others are drawn and where they encounter the presence and call of the Living God.

**"Outreach and bringing the Gospel to people in many different ways, in particular by 'living it', is so very important"  
(Gorleston parish)**

Why did we call our diocesan process 'Forward and Outward Together'? Because going forward together is not enough. Our deepest identity as the Church of Christ is about going 'outward' together as well as 'forward', reaching out with the Gospel to everyone around us. The Feast of Pentecost reminds us powerfully that Christian communities of any kind can never be content simply with being 'holy huddles', no matter how united in love and faith they may be. We are sent forth with the power of the Holy Spirit to be evangelising communities, and any renewal of our parish and deanery structures must always have that as our first priority. The Risen Jesus has given every parish its mission statement: 'As the Father sent me, so am I sending you' (John 20.21); 'You are to be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1.8). We are to be Apostle communities, fired with the Spirit of Pentecost.

Pentecost is the key. That is why we focused so much on the Sacrament of Confirmation during 2003 and 2004. Our diocesan renewal of Confirmation at Pentecost 2004 reminded us of our calling as baptised and confirmed Catholics. It is tempting to stay put together in our cosy Upper Rooms, but the Holy Spirit drives us out into the market-place to announce the Good News that Jesus is risen from the dead, and that he is with us.

Like the Good Shepherd, and in his name, we must go out in search of the lost sheep rather than simply remaining at home with the rest of the flock.

The call to 'evangelisation' is vital not only for those already within the Church, but also for that majority of people in our cities, towns and villages whose lives remain largely untouched by the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The radiant witness of our personal and parish lives is vital to this, but we also need to reach out to others, taking the light into the darkness. As Catholics, on our own but also united with other Christians, we must develop an effective and fruitful 'ministry of outreach'. We are called together to be 'the living Gospel for all to hear.' It is not enough to 'witness' to our faith in Jesus Christ; we must also 'share' that faith with others, spreading the Good News in an explicit way.

**Loving God,  
you called us each by name and gave your only Son to redeem us.  
In your faithfulness you sent the Holy Spirit  
to complete the mission of Jesus among us.**

**Open our hearts to Jesus.  
Give us the courage to speak his name to those who are close to us  
and the generosity to share his love with those who are far away.  
We pray that every person throughout the world  
be invited to know and love Jesus  
as Saviour and Redeemer.  
May they come to know his all-surpassing love.  
May that love transform every element in our society.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

*Prayer for 'Disciples in Mission'*

## **TOGETHER IN TRUST AND PARTNERSHIP**

A central theme which emerged throughout the discussions on 'Forward & Outward Together' was the need for trust.

**Trust in our Lord**, who is always with us, whatever our difficulties. He says to our diocese, to our parishes and smaller communities, to our families and to each of us: 'Do not be afraid; I am with you'. There may be times when we seem like the apostles in their boat on the stormy waters, with the 'waves' of the problems and challenges which we face breaking into our boat and threatening to swamp it. But the Lord is with us, and we have no need to fear (cf. Mark 4.35-41).

**Trust in each other:** bishop, priests and deacons in the diocese; priests and people in each parish. Many parish responses included a plea to parish priests to grant the gift of trust to lay people, and to be ready to 'entrust' to them certain parts of their work for which they remain ultimately responsible as parish priest but which are not part of their specific priestly ministry. There can be no fruitful collaboration and working in partnership without the gift of mutual trust and openness. Such trust is both a gift and a task. We may begin by taking the risk of trust, but that trust still needs to be earned and confirmed day by day.

"There is a need for trust for all those bringing about the development - for us to trust the bishop, the people to trust us and for us to trust the people"  
(Clergy of Peterborough deanery)

`Working together in partnership' is essential to our way forward together, at every level of our life in the Diocese of East Anglia.

## **Parishes working together**

How is the universal Catholic Church structured? The whole people of God is divided into dioceses, each entrusted to the pastoral leadership and care of a bishop. The diocese is then `divided into distinct parts or parishes' (Code of Canon Law, 374.1). Each parish is by nature an integral part of the diocese.

No parish family, therefore, is an isolated self-sufficient unit. Our very catholicity demands an openness to one another, and a sharing of life and mission. There is no room for narrow parochialism in the Catholic Church. Every parish is an integral part, a living cell, of the diocesan family, and every parish must be open in faith and love to all the other parishes, especially neighbouring ones. The universal Church is a `communion' of dioceses; our diocese is a `communion' of parishes; each parish is a `communion' of small local communities, families and individuals.

There are various ways of enabling cooperation and mutual support among parishes.

## **The Deanery**

What is a deanery? `To foster pastoral care by means of common action, several neighbouring parishes can be joined together in special groupings, such as deaneries' (Code of Canon Law, 374.2). Each deanery is led by a Dean appointed by the bishop to act in his name. In a scattered diocese such as ours, with many small parishes, working together in deaneries can be very fruitful, not only for the mutual support and care of the clergy, but also for pastoral and spiritual collaboration at local level.

In each deanery, there are regular meetings of the clergy, priests and deacons, both diocesan and religious, of that grouping of parishes. All are expected to attend meetings and participate as fully as possible in deanery life.

It is clear from many parish reports that there is little understanding among lay people of the meaning or value of deaneries.

The current urban deaneries (e.g. Ipswich & Peterborough) work better than rural ones. This is because urban deaneries are more compact, with parishes closer together. There needs to be flexibility across the diocese in the way we structure cooperation between parishes, and especially lay participation. In urban areas, the deanery will remain a valuable forum for lay people meeting and working together. In other areas, it may be better to focus on `sub-deaneries' (clearly distinct areas of a deanery) or clusters of parishes. The best way forward needs to be decided locally. The deanery will remain a key structure for local coordination of both ordained and lay ministry (e.g. catechetics and youth work), led by the local Dean.

**The deanery remains a key structure for strengthening the cooperation and 'communion' of local clergy and lay ministers.** (e.g. Youth, Evangelisation, Ecumenism, Marriage & Family Life).

**Each deanery is to have a Deanery Coordinating Catechist** whose role is to support parish catechists and to contribute to the development of catechesis and adult formation in the diocese as a member of the Commission for Evangelisation.

Each deanery is to have both a clergy and a lay representative on the **Diocesan Youth Commission**. Their role is to help develop local youth work, and pro-actively to encourage and support parish involvement in diocesan youth events and activities.

Each deanery is to have a clergy and a lay representative on the **Diocesan Ecumenical Commission**.

Each deanery is to have a lay representative on the renewed **Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life**.

There needs to be **flexibility** as to whether the deanery, 'sub-deanery' or parish cluster is the best setting for joint activities and events: e.g. adult formation and training, sacramental preparation (especially Confirmation & Marriage), youth work, sharing resources, days of recollection & retreats, social events.

The same flexibility is required in organising opportunities for **lay participation in discussion and decision-making at deanery level**. The Deanery Forum may work better in urban deaneries than rural ones. Elsewhere, such gatherings might better take place at 'sub-deanery' or cluster level. It is essential, however, that there be formal structures for such lay involvement within each deanery.

**Deans are encouraged to 'exchange' with parish priests in their deaneries**, so that local parishes can get to know their Dean and the Dean gain a better sense of those parishes.

**Each deanery will organise an annual event with the presence of the Bishop**. This may replace the Lenten Station Mass, and be organised at a more suitable time during the year when more people might attend. Such an event could include one or more of a number of possibilities: e.g. Mass, talk, social event. Each deanery is left to liaise with the Bishop as to the most suitable event for the locality.

"It is clear that the majority of lay people struggle with the concept of the deanery, and are much more comfortable with the concept of smaller clusters working together... Clustering seems popular: people can identify with it. It really looks as though it would be better to focus on clusters for lay participation"

*(Kings Lynn deanery)*

"Sharing resources means sharing people. People are our main resource." *(St Mary's parish, Ipswich)*

here will continue to be deanery representatives on key diocesan commissions

## The Cluster

Deanery and parish reports generally agree that there is great scope for the clustering of parishes and sharing of resources.

Even if we were sure of having enough priests in the future to keep our present parish structures, it would always be the case that some parishes do not have the personnel or resources on their own to provide all that is needed for a fully thriving parish life. These can range from simple photocopying facilities to organising Confirmation or Marriage Preparation programmes, the employment of a pastoral assistant, parish administrator or buildings supervisor, or running a retreat for Readers or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Many of these activities could be organised by 'clustering' neighbouring parishes and sharing resources; others may be more appropriate at deanery level.

In our diocese at this time, however, such 'clustering' is vital as a way to prepare for our future together. As our number of priests declines, parishes will need not only to work together ever more closely, but also eventually to be combined in some way.

We need to arrange most clusters in such a way that there is real potential for eventual combination into a single parish. Such clustering can be difficult in rural areas, and yet the combination of rural parishes may well become necessary over the coming decade.

**Our future together is likely, therefore, to be a two-stage process.** Firstly, the 'clustering' of distinct but neighbouring parishes, each with their own parish priest, but gradually working ever closer together, co-ordinating Mass times, and preparing for the time when they might be required to combine into a single parish. Secondly, the combination of two or more parishes into a single canonical parish with one parish priest, assisted when possible by other priests (newly-ordained, temporary visitors from overseas, retired, etc).

**A fundamental principle is that there are to be no 'priest-less' parishes in our diocese. However we organise our diocese in the future, developing lay leadership of local Catholic communities and enhancing the role played by permanent deacons, every community will be entrusted to the servant leadership of a priest appointed by the bishop as 'canonical pastor'.**

Within deaneries, or sometimes across deanery boundaries, two or more nearby parishes are to be 'clustered' to encourage the sharing of resources and to begin to prepare now for an imminent future with fewer priests.

Parishes in such 'clusters' are asked to examine how many Masses are really needed each weekend, and if possible to stagger Mass times so that neighbouring priests can 'supply' for each other when needed.

Parish priests of clustered parishes could consider occasional 'parish swaps' on Sundays, allowing neighbouring parishes to get to know the other priests in the cluster, and providing an opportunity for variety of preaching, etc.

If and when necessary, such 'clusters' will be the foundation of a new form of parish, with three current parishes served by two priests, or two served by one. Such clusters probably work best between similar kinds of parish (e.g. 'rural', 'urban', etc). There may be opportunities for communal living when appropriate and desired. Further consideration needs to be given to the possibility of a team of priests living together and serving a city or area.

The agreed 'clusters' are presented in Part Two of this plan . Such 'working and planning together' should begin immediately and develop over time. Some such clusters will need to become combined parishes quicker than others.

Progress in clustering will be monitored locally by the Deans who will report regularly to the Bishop through the College of Consultors. The Bishop will ask for a full report on progress when conducting his visitation of a parish.

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Every parish is a community of communities, whether villages or areas of a town or city. Although such local Catholic communities may not have Mass each weekend, they should still be encouraged to develop their community life within the wider life of the parish. This could include a local forum of some kind, weekday House Masses, occasional Sunday Mass, Scripture and prayer groups, and social events, giving much scope for developing forms of lay leadership.

'In the villages, what is needed is a way forward in which the parish can develop and provide for people's needs without the requirement for Sunday Mass there. A working structure in a parish is to build clusters of local communities, self-supporting and vibrant, with the parish church at their centre and as their focus. Such clusters should become a living presence of a lively Christian community, organising prayer groups, ecumenical events, providing support for those with needs at home, providing Christian education to all age groups, and communicating with others, both directly and through the parish centre.' (*St Philip Howard parish, Cambridge*)

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## **Working together in the parish**

The sacraments lie at the heart of our Catholic life, and these include the Sacrament of Holy Orders by which people are consecrated as Bishops, Priests and Deacons for the service of the Church. However few priests we may have over the coming decades, our priests will remain central and essential to our Catholic communities. Nothing said in this Pastoral Plan about the role of lay people should be seen as undermining the pivotal role of the priest, and especially the parish priest, in the life of every parish. Sharing the ministry of the bishop, the priest is a sacramental image of Christ the Good Shepherd. No-one can replace him in that role. Furthermore, the law of the Church gives the parish priest an ultimate responsibility for all aspects of parish life (including finance and administration, as well as liturgy, catechesis, pastoral care, etc) for which he is answerable to the Bishop and the Diocesan Trustees.

The priest does not lead and serve in isolation, however, but rather in collaboration and partnership with the whole parish community.

"The image of the parish priest as one who "does everything himself" and who is "the king of the parish" must give way to an alternative model of the parish priest "who works with..." despite difficulties and obstacles" (*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, pp.100-1)

"The believing community is the natural place for the life of the priest. It justifies his existence when he lives his identity, vocation and mission in its midst. His life is life within the community, with the community and for the community; and his greatest joy is the accompaniment of the Christian community, patiently, gently and persistently, so that it responds to its vocation and mission. This obliges the priest to reside always and truly in his parish, in order to build it up and make it a community of charity and participation"(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p.101)

The primary reason for encouraging and enabling the development in our diocese of greater lay participation is not in order to 'fill in' for priests as they become more stretched, but because of the dignity and responsibility which flows from Baptism and Confirmation

"The Church is not "you" and "us" and "them", but rather all of us together, each one according to their place and vocation."(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p.110)

Parish and deanery reports suggest there is an enthusiasm and a generous readiness among lay people in almost all parishes to take on many tasks of administration and other forms of leadership so that the priest can focus even more fruitfully on his role as pastor and spiritual leader. Although the parish priest is entrusted by the Bishop with an overall responsibility for the whole life of his parish, which he cannot hand over to others, there is tremendous room for developing the partnership of priest and people in every parish, with lay people being entrusted with the day-to-day administration of much of parish life as well as leadership of local communities within the parish (villages, neighbourhoods, etc), leading Scripture-reflection and prayer groups, catechesis, sacramental preparation, adult education, youth work, sharing chaplaincy work in schools, hospitals, prisons, universities and colleges, social events, welfare work, parish visiting, and ongoing care for the sick, the housebound, and the bereaved. A key role of priests and deacons is to discern the giftedness of lay people and to encourage them to use those gifts, always sensitive to their other responsibilities.

Encouraging lay people to take on such tasks is not simply a matter of helping fewer priests to focus on their vital tasks; it is far more about enabling lay people - women and men - to live more fully their call to active and responsible participation in the life of our Church at every level and in the Church's mission to the world.

. It is essential that the full dignity and equality of **women** be recognised in our diocese, and we hope that lay women will play an ever more fruitful role at the heart of our parish and diocesan life. The development of lay leadership and other ministries (at cluster, deanery and diocesan level, as well as in the parish) should provide opportunities for greater use of so many unused skills and resources, especially the often untapped intellectual and leadership skills of women in the Church.

Lay women are already generally far more involved than lay men in ministry and service in the Church. We also need to ensure that lay **men** of all ages are encouraged and welcomed into forms of leadership and involvement.

It is hoped that the 'Structures for Lay Participation' established on pages 36-37 will provide opportunities for lay women and men to be involved more effectively in decision-making in the parish, cluster, deanery and diocese.

It is all too easy, however, as we seek to involve lay people more in parish life, to put increasing pressures on people who are already busy and burdened, and whose calling may be to live and share the Gospel precisely in their home and workplace rather than by taking on yet more parish activities. Sometimes the best way to enable people to live their true Christian vocation is by reducing rather than increasing the number of 'churchy' duties they so generously take on. The joyful privilege of belonging to God's family involves duty and responsibility, but it should not drain people of their little remaining energy as they struggle to earn a living, bring up a family and cope with the strains and stresses of our world. Many people simply do not have the time to give more of themselves to their local parish, deanery or diocese, and they should not be asked or expected to do so. There are some people who give much of their limited time to the Church who perhaps should be giving some or all of that time to their families as part of their sacred vocation as spouse and parent. It is in their ordinary daily lives, nourished each Sunday at Mass by the Word of God and the Bread of Life, that they live and share their Catholic faith.

### **Needs and Skills Audits**

Every member of our church communities has God-given gifts and talents for the service of Christ in his Church and the world. Each is a vital member of the Body of Christ. No-one plays the role of the 'appendix' in that Body! Everyone is needed (see St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, ch. 12, verses 4-30).

Before anyone is invited to offer their gifts and talents, each parish community must first explore what forms of ministry and service are most needed for the development of its life, liturgy and mission. What are the gaps in the parish, especially in the light of your local discussions on "Forward & Outward Together" and this Diocesan Pastoral Plan? **A 'Needs Audit' should precede any 'Skills Audit'.**

Once the needs have been identified, simple but clear 'job descriptions' could usefully be drawn up so that those offering themselves - and the church community they are to serve - know what to expect.

Our church communities are full of gifts and talents, and they need to be revealed, discovered and used where possible, always with sensitivity to the limits of people's time and energy. Once generously offered, every effort should be made to follow up and use those skills.

A 'skills audit' of some kind, perhaps linked with a general census, may be the best way of discovering what people have to offer and inviting them to become more involved in the life of the church. Such a questionnaire might well include a general question such as "What specialist skills do you have which you would be prepared to put at the service of the Church?", as well as a 'tick list' of forms of service in which they might be interested, based on the 'Needs Audit' previously carried out. People should be asked to indicate a willingness to train when appropriate for any ministry or

service. Not all forms of service require training. Some people will already have the skills and expertise required for those that do.

We should not always wait for people to volunteer. There are times when it is best pro-actively to invite people to offer their time and talents for a particular service.

An annual 'Parish Opportunities Fair', with stalls advertising various opportunities for service in a parish, can be a fruitful and fun way of encouraging people to sign up for ministries and service. It could be organised on the lines of the beginning-of-year 'Freshers Fairs' at universities, perhaps combined with a parish fete or social activity.

## **Greater lay involvement & lay leadership**

Lay people need responsibility, opportunity and encouragement. For some, this means deeper involvement and participation in the life of the life, liturgy and mission of the local church community. For others, it will mean sharing in leadership.

Several deaneries and parishes suggested greater use of lay pastoral assistants, coordinators and administrators, but no consensus on this has yet emerged. For some parishes, the possible funding implications are a disincentive, although it should be noted that Brentwood Diocese operates a widespread system of voluntary pastoral assistants with an established training two-year programme.

Once again, flexibility is required. The parishes in our diocese are often very different to each other with regard to the size and average age of the congregation, financial resources and general needs. Some parishes are already well-served by a team of volunteers. A few already have full-time or part-time lay people supporting the life of the parish, including pastoral assistants, parish secretaries, site managers, administrators. One thing is certain, however. In every parish, lay people should increasingly be entrusted with many if not most of the administrative tasks, as well as participating more fully in pastoral care and outreach. In developing job descriptions for those who take on such roles, it is important to distinguish pastoral ministries of evangelisation, catechesis, care, etc from roles of administration. Both are important to any parish; some may well be combined in one person with multiple responsibilities; but they are different roles requiring different skills and different training.

**It is diocesan policy that we develop different forms of lay leadership in every parish and across the diocese.**

Besides the possible use of full or part-time pastoral assistants, administrators, etc, this should include the leadership and coordination of:

- smaller communities within parishes (villages, neighbourhood groups, etc),
- adult formation and catechetical programmes including sacramental preparation
- evangelising teams
- youth work
- pastoral care of the sick, housebound, bereaved, etc.

Some concern was expressed in parish reports that such lay leaders should not take over the distinctive role of the priest. This concern is echoed in *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, but any true working in partnership in the Catholic Church will always involve ordained ministers and lay people exercising their distinctive roles, in full harmony and with full respect for each other.

Such involvement by lay people should be as wide as possible in each parish, rather than focused on a handful of key people. 'Working together' is as vital for lay leaders among themselves as it is for priests among themselves and with deacons and lay people.

There are parishes where a few people seem to do everything. On the one hand, their generous dedication should be welcomed with gratitude: most parishes need such people. On the other hand, those few are in an important position to draw others into deeper involvement in the parish community. The more people who are actively involved at the heart of parish life, the happier the parish community will be. The service of the 'faithful few' will only change if everyone is made to feel they are a vital part of the life and work of the church, with their own gifts and talents to offer. "Lay leadership supported by good training should be key to the overall development of the diocese" (*individual response*)

"Lay leadership is crucial and must be taken seriously" (*Costessey parish*)

## **Formation and training for ministry and service**

Prudent selection and careful formation is very important for both lay and ordained ministry.

For some of these services, professional training will be needed. Some parish and deanery responses suggested, for certain forms of leadership and ministry, a formal diocesan programme of training, validation and commissioning.

Because of the nature of our diocese, and the flexibility needed, it may not be easy to develop a simple diocesan programme for formation and training for such lay people taking on key positions of responsibility. We will need to develop a flexible programme which can be of support to people in very different situations.

There clearly needs to be further discussion before we embark on a diocesan programme of any kind. We must identify the areas of need, and develop a programme which is as flexible and user-friendly as possible.

Between September 2004 and July 2005, **further parish, cluster, deanery and diocesan discussion** is required to clarify our training needs and what can most usefully be contributed by a diocesan programme.

Most reports suggest a **diocesan programme delivered locally**, either at county, deanery or cluster level. Appropriate funding must be found.

There seems to be general agreement that such a programme should be flexible, modular, and incorporate distance-learning and on-line methodologies. Twice-termly Saturday sessions and/or 'Summer Schools' were also suggested. It is difficult for busy

people to spare time for in-depth training: any programme needs to be realistic about people's ability to commit themselves to regular meetings.

Any training must be appropriate and effective. Although there was no complete agreement on this, there appears to be a balance in favour of some form of validation and certification on completing all or part of the programme. In some cases, a diocesan commissioning would be appropriate.

The development of such a programme needs to take full account of the official Bishops Conference 'Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies' (CCRS) which was designed in part to answer the needs expressed above and which is usually run on the lines proposed in point 3. The CCRS is currently under review, nationally and in the diocese. There should be no unnecessary duplication of programmes.

Where appropriate, any diocesan programme will be developed in liaison and cooperation with the Margaret Beaufort Institute, the Cambridge Theological Federation, etc.

If people are to give their time and talents to such special training and formation, we need to ensure that whenever possible they are offered opportunities for service and not ignored.

Those who give their time and talents need to be thanked and encouraged. Some parishes organise an annual Mass and social event for parish workers.

'Volunteers are one of the Church's most valued assets, and as such should be cherished' (*individual response*)

### **Limited terms of service**

We need to be very sensitive about placing undue pressures on lay people who are already busy, and especially those whose sacred vocation to marriage and family life may suffer from too much involvement in church affairs.

Nearly all deanery and parish responses agreed that a limited - though renewable - term of office should be adopted for all forms of lay ministry and service in the church. This would help to ensure that people do not feel 'trapped' in a role, and also that new people can be given opportunities for service. A limited term of office might encourage people to take on a responsibility without the fear of having to carry it on for life! On the other hand, it would be good if all were ready cheerfully to hand over ministries (e.g. Reader, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Catechist) and other forms of service to others after a certain time, perhaps to take up other forms of service instead.

"A term of office is a very good idea. If people knew they would only have to do something for a number of years, they might be more confident about coming forward" (*King's Lynn parish*)

Once again, flexibility is required, as it can be difficult in smaller parishes to find replacements. The expertise gained through formation, training and experience should

not be automatically time-limited, but such gifts and talents can often be used in many different ways.

## **Adult religious formation**

All responses highlighted the need for a programme of adult religious formation, in addition to any specific programmes for training for ministry and service. Some parishes and deaneries have already initiated local programmes of adult formation. A diocesan input seems to be welcome, but delivered locally in some way (three centres, one in each county; deanery; parish clusters; parish) rather than in one place in the diocese.

**Every parish is to have a Parish Coordinating Catechist**, working with the Deanery Coordinating Catechist to ensure the best possible catechesis, adult formation, sacramental preparation, etc. Those who have already trained as 'Key Catechists' are obviously very well prepared to take on one or either of these key positions, as a resource for other catechists.

**The ongoing formation of catechists throughout the diocese is vital**, and a priority for the Commission for Evangelisation which includes all Deanery Coordinating catechists among its members.

**The place of the 'Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies' (CCRS) needs to be reviewed**, in the light of the Bishops Conference and the need for a diocesan programme for training for lay leadership and involvement.

## **Working together with other Christians**

All of this section so far has been about 'working together' within the Catholic community, but our common baptism calls us to work together as closely as possible with our fellow Christians and their communities at every level of the Church.

Ecumenism is not always easy, but it is not an optional extra for Catholics. It is not only as individual parish communities, clusters of parishes, deaneries or even as a diocesan family within the Roman Catholic Communion that we move forward and outward. It is with our fellow Christians, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

When church leaders meet, so often we find that we have the same challenges and problems. There is so much can be done together, above all in our public witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of East Anglia. It is united with other Christians that we can most effectively and fruitfully be 'the living Gospel for all to hear.'

There are already very good and friendly relationships between the church leaders in East Anglia. Anglican and Catholic Bishops, and Methodist, United Reformed Church, Baptist, Salvation Army and other church leaders, need to be seen together, praying together, teaching together, leading together, sometimes just being together. The same is true at local level.

Ecumenism is always a challenge, but especially so in East Anglia. Roman Catholics are a small minority in a part of the country which has not always been welcoming to us. Moreover, our geographically-large Catholic parishes often encompass a large number of Anglican and other communities, making good active relationships difficult to maintain. Catholic clergy cannot attend all fraternals and ecumenical meetings in their area, and this will become even more difficult as the number of clergy decreases. The involvement of well-catechised lay people will become increasingly important. Within these constraints, however, and always in accordance with Catholic principles (see the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism, 1993) praying and working together with other Christians remains a priority:

- Catholic communities should be as involved as possible in local **Christians Together or Churches Together**. If there are not already effective **clergy fraternals**, it would be good for Catholic priests to initiate and host such fraternals. As so often, it is the building of good personal relations which is often a vital step towards effective ecumenism. Joint social events with other churches can build good relations.
- **Scripture-study groups** and prayer groups can often be organised on an ecumenical basis. **Joint services** are an established practice during Christian Unity Week, but there are surely other opportunities during the year to worship and witness together.
- **Teaching** can often be done together (e.g. Bishop Michael and Bishop Graham's teaching session on Baptism at St John's Cathedral in Lent 2004; this 'Two Cathedrals' event is now to become an annual one). Several churches could get together to run a series of talks and discussions on a common topic, with plenty of opportunity for friendly airing of differences as well as agreement). The various 'agreed statements' between Christian Churches should be explored together.
- Several Anglican and Methodist **churches** in our diocese already give a warm welcome to Catholics gathering for Mass at the weekend. When a Mass centre or church is too small for a congregation when we need to reduce the number of Masses, it may make sense to move to a welcoming larger Anglican or other church.
- There are several **Local Ecumenical Partnerships** in the diocese, including special chaplaincies. Reference should be made to the newly-published set of leaflets from the Bishops Conference on LEPs.

The Catholic Church is fully committed to pursuing the path to full Christian Unity. As Pope John Paul wrote in his encyclical letter *Ut unum sint*, 'At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture...'. Without in any way abandoning or undermining our distinctive Catholic teaching, ecumenism must be central to our Catholic life: 'Thus it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of "appendix" which is added to the Church's traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does...' (*Ut unum sint*, 20).

## **Working together with people of other faiths**

There is a growing opportunity in East Anglia, especially in some places, to grow in friendship with people of other faiths. We should not simply live side-by-side in a quiet co-existence with Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, etc. There should be an active co-existence, reaching out to each other in mutual respect and working to build good relations. There will be occasions when we can learn about each other, meet together socially, and work together for the common good.

The large number of Muslims moving into Western Europe in general, and to parts of our diocese in particular, challenges us to explore the relationship between Christianity and Islam. This is something which will be increasingly important for all Christian communities in East Anglia, not least because very many Muslims are ready to live and proclaim their faith in a naturally open and public way which Catholics often find difficult. Perhaps our Muslim neighbours will inspire us to be more joyfully open about our Catholic faith

## **Structures for Lay Participation**

"Parishioners who feel responsible for engaging in the work of their parishes are acutely aware of the need for priests to trust them more. The days of every single decision having to be personally sanctioned by 'Father' have to end if parishioners are to become responsible adults within the local church, rather than mere helpers to the priest in his responsibilities. Without this, people only see a diminishing Church and an exhausted clergy. This need for shared responsibility goes beyond the concept of 'collaboration', as there is real concern that, at least in places, there won't be any priest to collaborate with if the present trend continues." (*St Mary's parish, Ipswich*)

The church is a family, and as in any family, everyone should be as involved as possible in family life, each according to their particular place in the family. In Catholic teaching, bishops and priests - assisted by deacons - have a distinctive and irreplaceable role as making visible the Risen Christ as our shepherd and teacher. But the whole baptised community is the royal and priestly people of God, and our common dignity and equality is the setting for the role of ordained ministers. It is therefore essential that lay people be given every opportunity to play their full part in the life, liturgy and mission of the church in the diocese, deanery, cluster, parish and smaller communities, always in accordance with Catholic doctrine and Canon Law.

**A Diocesan Council of Laity will be established, with one lay representative from each canonical parish.** Such a representative will usually be the lay chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council or its equivalent, or that person's delegate. The Council will meet twice a year with the Bishop to discuss, be consulted on and contribute to the planning of key aspects of the life and mission of the diocese.

As and when such a gathering is judged necessary or useful by the Bishop, in liaison with the College of Consultors, this Council will hold a joint meeting of a representative group of priests, deacons and religious from the diocese. This will constitute any future **Diocesan Pastoral Council**.

**Occasional diocesan meetings** will also be held of lay people involved in particular aspects of diocesan life (cf. those already held on youth work, justice and peace, people with disabilities, marriage and family life). Such specialist gatherings contribute another dimension to the process of diocesan consultation.

**There will be a *forum* or *fora* for lay discussion and collaboration within every deanery.** This could be (a) one *forum* for the whole deanery (especially in urban deaneries); (b) separate *fora* for parts of a deanery (for example, in the Cambridge Deanery, where the Cambridge city parishes, Sawston and Ely might meet separately from the four parishes of Buckden, Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neot's); (c) separate *fora* in more rural deaneries for clusters of parishes, although still feeding into a single deanery report of some kind on issues for discussion.

Whether or not cluster meetings are opted for above, all **clusters** of parishes are strongly encouraged to hold occasional inter-parish discussions so that lay people can contribute to the development of the clustering process.

'There is a need for a *forum* in each parish at which people can express their views and put forward ideas, and feel that their suggestions are being given due consideration. There is also an occasional need for a more formal mechanism for consultation within the parish' (*OLEM parish, Cambridge*)

**It is diocesan policy that every parish have an established public *forum* of some kind to enable lay consultation and participation in parish pastoral life and planning.** Parishes are left to organise what kind of arrangement is most appropriate, although this should be decided at an open meeting of the parish rather than by the clergy alone.

**The main options for such a *forum* are:**

- **an established Parish Pastoral Council**, with a constitution and members elected and appointed as agreed.
- **an open Parish-in-Council** to which everyone is invited. This may require a Steering group to ensure that agreed recommendations are put into practice.

Any parish *forum* should meet at least twice a year, and be chaired by a lay person who will normally be the parish representative on the Diocesan Council of Laity.

It may be appropriate for **smaller communities within a parish**, especially those now or once centred on a place of worship (whether or not Sunday Mass is celebrated there), to have their own *forum* for supporting their local Catholic community life. Such a local community and its *forum* should be fully integrated into the wider life of the parish. It is always the main Parish Pastoral Council or Parish-in-Council which is to be seen as the primary *forum*. Local communities could well be represented formally on any Parish Pastoral Council, or take a full part in any Parish-in-Council.

## TOGETHER IN PRAYER

Several reports highlighted the danger of becoming so caught up in structural and practical matters in the diocese and parishes that we fail to focus on the heart of the matter: our call to grow into an ever-deeper personal (but never private) relationship with our Lord as members of his Church, the family of God. Our prayer and worship are central to this spiritual growth and renewal. We are called to be people of prayer and people of worship. The story of Martha and Mary in St Luke's Gospel reminds us that we should not become so engrossed in 'activity' that we lose sight of our spiritual centre: we need Marthas in every church community, serving with zeal and enthusiasm, but it was Mary, sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to his word, who had chosen 'the better part' (Luke 10.42).

We could all learn much from words often seen in Catholic communities in Cambodia, rooted in the dominant Buddhist spirituality of the people there. For us, the Risen Christ alone can give us the peace the world cannot give, and it is above all in prayer that we receive his gift of peace.

The suffering of Cambodia has been deep  
From this suffering comes Great Compassion.  
Great Compassion makes a Peaceful Heart.  
A Peaceful Heart makes a Peaceful Person.  
A Peaceful Person makes a Peaceful Family.  
A Peaceful Family makes a Peaceful Community.  
A Peaceful Community makes a Peaceful Nation.  
A Peaceful Nation makes a Peaceful World.  
May all beings live in Happiness and Peace.

Each of us needs to be a prayerful person, as a member of a prayerful family and a prayerful parish. Any deepening of our prayer life needs to happen in our families and homes, and in our parishes, but the diocese may be able to give support in different ways. No parish can move forward unless its life and work is rooted in prayer.

The disciples asked Jesus, 'Teach us to pray.' Every Catholic community in our diocese should be a '**school for prayer**', helping us to pray on our own, with our friends, in our families and with fellow disciples of Jesus.

As and when appropriate, the diocese will provide **prayer cards and special liturgies** (e.g. those produced for Pentecost 2004).

**Times of prayer** should be part of nearly all sacramental programmes, children's and adult formation, talks, etc in a church setting.

The development of a range of **prayer groups** is encouraged, both within a Catholic setting and with other Christians. Opportunities should be provided to learn different ways of praying, and to try them out in a supportive environment. These groups should always lead members back to parish life and liturgy.

**A parish lending library** with carefully-selected books on prayer would be a help to many.

**A prayer intentions board or book** at the back of the church, regularly checked and referred to by the priests and people as a source of intentions, provides a further focus for prayer.

**Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours** (especially Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer) is encouraged in parishes, smaller communities, groups and families.

**Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** is strongly encouraged in every parish. Silent adoration should be the main form of prayer, and adoration should always be arranged in such a way that it is seen to flow from the Celebration of Mass and leads us back to it. Every parish is asked to try to arrange at least one hour of public Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each week. Longer periods of Adoration may be possible with a rota of adorers. One great advantage of such adoration is that the church can be kept open during that time even in those places which are usually locked.

As already mentioned, **Scripture-reflection groups** are strongly encouraged, especially when the readings for the following Sunday are read and explored in a setting of prayerful reflection. 'Welcoming the word of God' lies at the heart of our call to welcome the Eternal Word in person into our lives. As St Jerome said, 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.'

Several parishes already organise **days of reflection, times of quiet and retreats** for parishioners. Diocesan events for young people involving prayer and reflection are already being organised. There is much room for the development of such events at diocesan, deanery, cluster, parish and community level.

We should make full use of the **centres of prayer** which already exist in our diocese: the National Shrine at Walsingham, Clare Priory, Buckden Towers, Hengrave Hall and other places of pilgrimage. We should explore together as a diocese ways to make more fruitful use of the spiritual resources we already have.

**Pilgrimage** is an important part of our life of prayer. Annual diocesan pilgrimages already take place to Lourdes, Taize and Walsingham. Smaller pilgrimages are now developing to the Holy Land.

**Spiritual direction** should be encouraged for lay people. The diocese should build up a living resource of spiritual directors available for people across the diocese. Our religious communities may be in a special position to offer such a ministry. Lay people can also be trained for this service of accompanying others in their spiritual journey through life.

"Raising the profile of prayer and spirituality for lay people seems to be key"

*(individual response)*

"The Mass is our greatest prayer"

*(Kings Lynn parish)*

## LIVING THE SACRAMENTS

By our baptism and confirmation, we are together a priestly community, above all when we come together to celebrate the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Mass. The liturgy lies at the very centre of the life of our Catholic communities, and the renewal of our liturgy is central to the continual renewal which our diocese and parishes will always need. The liturgy is not a spectacle which we watch as though at a theatre; it is the worship of the whole community, gathered together as God's family, and we are called to take part '**knowingly, actively and fruitfully**' (Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, art. 11). The renewal of our liturgy should focus on those three words:

**"Knowingly"**: further education on the meaning of the liturgy should be central to any diocesan and parish programme of adult Christian formation.

**"Actively"**: we should work towards being as inclusive as possible regarding the liturgy. No-one should feel excluded, and all should feel welcome. Active participation is the norm for all. Every parish is encouraged to establish a Liturgy Committee to contribute to the overall development of liturgy.

**"Fruitfully"**: we can do more to celebrate the liturgy in a way that encourages and inspires people, and allows God's transforming love to be at work within the whole community and each individual. The liturgy is only fully fruitful if we grow in personal holiness, in love for each other, and in deeper involvement in the Church's mission to the world. Mass and mission, worship and witness belong inextricably together.

"The liturgy actualises salvation, making it real for every believer and every community of believers which celebrates it. In the liturgy, Christ, the one who is living, dying and rising from the dead, is present and active in the faithful. He fills them with divine life and makes them his people. The liturgy is the act of Christ gathering his Church, building it up, sanctifying it, revealing it and making it a sign and instrument for all humanity."(*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, p. 41)  
"People can be put off church by bad liturgy. Conversely, people are more likely to maintain regular Sunday attendance if their experience of the liturgy is a good one."(*Diocesan Liturgy Commission*)

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"People can be put off church by bad liturgy. Conversely, people are more likely to maintain regular Sunday attendance if their experience of the liturgy is a good one."(*Diocesan Liturgy Commission*)

## **TOUCHING THE HEART**

Liturgy is an encounter with the living God in the midst of his family, the Church. It should be a deeply personal encounter, renewing and enriching our relationship with the Lord.

Catholic liturgy should touch the heart of each person present. The whole human being takes part in liturgy - body, mind, heart and soul - and there is a long and rich tradition in the Catholic Church of reaching the invisible inner person through the visible and tangible: through art and music, sight and sound, through touch, smell and taste (e.g. laying-on of hands, incense, etc).

Although we must never reduce the experience of God to our emotions, we should not ignore people's desire to 'feel' something of the peace, warmth and joy of God's presence in the liturgy. The disciples came away from their meeting with the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus saying, 'Did not our hearts burn within us?' If only everyone could come away from our liturgical celebrations saying the same!

Through both Word and Sacrament the Lord comes to touch and transform our hearts. True religion is a love relationship with God, a thing of the 'heart' (in the sense of our deepest inner self), and we should try to celebrate the liturgy in a way that touches the heart. Our liturgy must address the spiritual hunger and thirst of God's people. We come together to lift our hearts to the Father, to be nourished by the Risen Lord who is the Word of God and the Bread of Life, and to drink of the Living Water that is the Holy Spirit.

Our parish communities and our liturgy should be the fountain, the living spring, the well from which people can quench their spiritual thirst with the joy of salvation

## **RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION**

Becoming and being a Christian is a journey of faith that takes place within the pilgrim community of the faithful. Indeed, this process of welcome is sometimes called 'Journey in Faith' rather than RCIA.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the "exemplar and rule for all Christian initiation" (Bishops of England, Scotland and Wales, 1988). It is the normative way for adults to be welcomed through Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion into the Catholic Church. Such a process aims to integrate new members into the faith and life of the parish community and the diocese.

Far from being an imposition aimed at making becoming a Catholic more difficult, the RCIA or 'Journey in Faith' is a positive way of enriching and deepening the identity of a parish community, and is one of the special gifts to the Catholic Church of the Second Vatican Council.

Although the RCIA team of the priest and catechists plays a vital role in this process, the whole Catholic community has a responsibility to welcome and support those on their journey to initiation or reception. This needs to be made visible especially in liturgical celebrations. When these celebrations do not happen, or are reduced to a

bare minimum, both the people being welcomed and the parish community are deprived.

**It is diocesan policy that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (sometimes called 'Journey in Faith') is the normative process for welcoming unbaptised adults as well as baptised adults seeking reception into full communion with the Catholic Church.** The Rite allows for flexibility in special circumstances, but every parish or cluster of parishes should have an RCIA programme in place. This is already well-established in most parishes in our diocese. Smaller parishes without such a programme could organise RCIA with neighbouring parishes, and share resources.

Unless there is a very strong pastoral reason why this should not be the case, initiation or reception should take place at the Easter Vigil.

There are four main stages in the process of initiation. How these are organised will vary from parish to parish depending on the length of the programme (e.g. one year or two):

- **Enquiry:** people expressing an interest in becoming a Catholic explore together what this might mean. In a one-year programme, such a period might last from the Summer or Autumn until Christmas, leading to the **Rite of Acceptance or Welcome** in the parish at the beginning of January.
- From the Rite of Acceptance, enquirers become either a **Catechumen** (if preparing for Baptism) or a **Candidate** (if a baptised Christian preparing to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church). This leads up to the **Rite of Election** with the Bishop at the Cathedral on the afternoon of the First Sunday of Lent. Unless there are insuperable practical difficulties, all Catechumens and Candidates from across the diocese should attend this celebration with their priests, sponsors, families, friends and members of their parish communities.
- The period of Lent is for catechumens (known as 'the elect' after the Rite of Election) and candidates a special period of **Purification and Enlightenment**, during which they are given more intense spiritual preparation with the prayerful support of the parish community. For the catechumens, as full a use as possible should be made of the rites provided (Scrutinies, presentation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, etc). This leads to the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil. The newly-initiated with their sponsors and families could be invited to a simple social event immediately after the vigil (whether just a glass of wine or a parish party).
- From the Easter Vigil until Pentecost, there follows the period of **Post-Baptismal Catechesis** (or *Mystagogia*) during which the newly-baptised (neophytes) and the newly-received deepen their understanding of the mystery of Christ and his Church, and are helped to be integrated into the daily life, worship, devotions and mission of the church. The group usually continues to meet during this time.

## BAPTISM

By our baptism, we are immersed into the life of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, and so made new people, delivered from the power of sin and set on the path to holiness. We are immersed into the mystery of Christ and his Church, as beloved daughters and sons of the Father in his family, as sisters and brothers of one another in Christ, and as the living temple of the Holy Spirit. That is both an awesome gift of grace from God, and an awesome responsibility for parents to take on for their children. It is clear that we can be much better prepared for baptism, much more involved in all baptisms in our parish communities, and much more committed to welcome the newly-baptised into the lives of our parish families.

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"It is essential that baptism be preceded by an appropriate preparation, in at least one meeting or more with the family and godparents...in order to make them aware of the meaning of presenting their child to be baptised and their responsibility in this. Baptism might even be an opportunity to revive the grace of baptism in the family, among the godparents and in the parish"(<em>General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land

**It is diocesan policy that every parish provide a full and adequate preparation programme for infant baptism, and that attendance be required for parents having their first child baptised, as well as for others when appropriate. Godparents should also attend when possible.**

Baptism is a wonderful opportunity to renew links between parents and the community of the Church, and it is a missed opportunity if there is no more than a filling-in of forms and the service itself. Each parish has different resources available.

Couples or individuals expecting a baby are encouraged to come forward for a  **blessing for pregnancy**. This would be a good time to enrol for baptism preparation.

The diocese recommends a **baptism preparation course** of two or three evenings, or if necessary a longer weekend session, perhaps made available every few months, and led by lay catechists with involvement by a priest or deacon. Parents (and godparents when available) of children being baptised in the coming months meet together. Parishioners could be available to provide tea and coffee, and look after any children. The parents should still complete the forms with the priest or deacon so that personal contact can be made; it is good for the priest or deacon baptising the child to visit the family in their home before the baptism to go through the details of the service. In some small parishes, the course could be led by clergy. Alternatively clusters of neighbouring parishes could organise preparation together.

The course should include discussion of why they want their child baptised; an understanding of the heart of the meaning of baptism, as being immersed into the mystery of the life of the Triune God and into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, and so delivered from original sin, as well as initiation into the community of the Church as God's family; and an understanding of Christian initiation as a journey of gradually deeper belonging, leading to First Communion, Confirmation and a life-time of active sharing in the life and mission of the Church. The Rite itself can be used as a way of leading the parents to an understanding of its meaning.

Suitable **audio-visual materials** can be effectively used in such a programme.

The Diocesan Commission for Evangelisation will monitor suitable **programmes and resources**, and provide training for baptism preparation catechists as needed.

**For an infant to be baptised, the Catholic Church requires there to be a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic faith.** This must always be judged with pastoral sensitivity and love. If such a hope is truly lacking, the baptism is to be deferred (cf. Code of Canon Law, canon 868; Instruction on Infant Baptism, n. 28). Any such decision is one of 'pastoral delay' rather than refusal, in order to help the parents be more ready to undertake the very serious commitment involved in having their child baptised.

If parents who are not parishioners ask for baptism for their child, Canon 857 # 2 should be borne in mind: 'As a rule and unless a just reason suggests otherwise, an adult is to be baptised in his or her proper parish church, and an infant in the proper parish church of the parents.'

**Godparents** should be chosen carefully, and with a full understanding of their role. Only one godparent is required. Any godparent is there to represent the Catholic Church, and must therefore be a confirmed, practising Catholic aged 16 or above (Code of Canon Law, canon 874). Other dedicated Christians are invited to be 'Christian Witnesses' at a baptism, and will continue to be examples of Christian living for the child as he or she grows up.

## **Celebration of Baptism**

Baptism involves welcome into the community of the Church. It can never, therefore, be a private ritual simply for the family and friends of those being baptised. There can be no such thing as a private baptism.

**The names** of those to be baptised should be announced in the parish newsletter, and including in the Intercessions at Mass.

**Baptism during Sunday Mass** highlights most strongly the communal aspect of baptism. When celebrated with sensitivity to the congregation, and making full use of the pastoral options allowed in the liturgy, such a Mass need not take much longer than an ordinary Sunday Mass. A large parish may need to adopt a policy regarding how often baptism is celebrated at Sunday Mass.

When Baptism is not celebrated during Mass, the baptism service should be announced in the parish newsletter, and the **whole parish community** invited to participate. This does not mean the whole parish has to be invited to the Christening Party!

When Baptism is not celebrated during Mass, the diocese recommends a **public welcome** of the newly-baptised and their family at Mass the following Sunday. This could take place at the beginning of Mass, after the greeting.

## Follow-Up to Baptism

The priest or deacon who baptises the child should pay a **pastoral visit** to the family in their home some time after the baptism.

Some parishes find that a monthly **'Buggy Mass'** (for parents with their babies, toddlers and pre-school children) on a weekday morning is a good way to draw young parents into the liturgical and social life of the parish, and to meet other people. Such a Mass can be celebrated very simply, in a child-friendly setting suitable for wandering toddlers and with nappy-changing facilities nearby.

Parishes could consider an **annual Mass** or other celebration to which all babies and children baptised during the past year are invited along with their parents, with a social afterwards. Advent or Christmastide is a good time for this. Parents could be invited to bring their babies and children forward for a special blessing during the Mass.

The parish could send a specially-designed **anniversary card** to each child on the first anniversary of their baptism.

Families are strongly encouraged to **celebrate yearly baptism anniversaries**, with special prayers, cards, presents and parties. This would be a wonderful way of building up a sense of being God's son or daughter, and of belonging to the family of God. Parents' baptism anniversaries should also be celebrated. The baptismal candle should be lit at any celebration on such an occasion.

Many young parents may appreciate the provision of **parenting sessions**. There are established courses for parents of babies and toddlers, primary age children and teenagers. Such courses usually involve small groups which are in themselves ways of supporting young parents and drawing them into the family life of the Church.

## Unity with other Christians

Baptism is the sacred sacramental bond between all baptised Christians, and it is the foundation for the unity we already share. Because of our baptism, there is already a real although imperfect communion between Christians. By baptism, we are brothers and sisters in the one family of God. Perhaps local churches could hold a joint service each year during Eastertide to celebrate our common baptism. When one parent is a committed member of another Christian community, a priest or minister of that community may be invited to take some part in the rite of baptism, while leaving the Catholic priest or deacon to perform the central elements of the rite (cf. *Directory on Ecumenism*, no 97).

## CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation was a major focus for our diocese in 2004, leading up to a renewal of our Confirmation in every parish at Pentecost. Our Confirmation is our Pentecost: anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are sent forth into the world by Christ himself to proclaim him to the world by our words and deeds, and by the way we live, as individuals, families and parish communities. At our

Confirmation, we 'go public' with our faith, ready to confess it boldly before others. Our Confirmation is our commissioning to be evangelists or gospel-bearers. All of us in our diocese who have been confirmed are called to fill East Anglia with the message of God's love in Jesus Christ.

Lord, fulfil your promise.  
Send your Holy Spirit  
to make us witnesses before the world  
to the good news proclaimed  
by Jesus Christ our Lord.

*(The Roman Missal: alternative opening prayer for the Rite of Confirmation)*

"the sacrament of Confirmation, together with Baptism, is the basis for the mission of the lay person in the Church, for it makes him or her a full member of the people of God..."

*(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p. 45)*

**It is diocesan policy that Confirmation will always be administered by the Bishop, except in danger of death, or when the faculty has been given to a priest to receive a person into Full Communion with the Catholic Church or to confirm for some other special reason.**

**It is also diocesan policy that, except in the danger of death, Confirmation will be administered in secondary school Year 10 (the school year in which a young person reaches the age of 15) or above.**

## **Confirmation Preparation**

Preparation for Confirmation can be organised either in a parish, among a cluster of parishes or in a deanery. Any preparation programme should be full and adequate, enabling young people to reflect on their personal relationship with God and their belonging to the Church, helping them to grow in prayer, and preparing them to become full members of the Church, sharing the Church's mission to the world.

Although Confirmation will not be administered until Year 10, preparation can begin before then. Some parishes now use a two-year preparation programme, combining teaching with social events, weekends away and fun activities.

Any preparation programme should take full account of the Diocesan Confirmation Pack provided to all parishes in the Summer of 2003.

The Bishop would welcome the opportunity to meet candidates for Confirmation during their time of preparation.

The Bishop is happy to visit parishes for Confirmation no matter how small the group of candidates. Alternatively, Confirmation celebrations could be organised with neighbouring parishes.

## Celebration of Confirmation

**All Confirmation Masses should be organised using the norms issued by the Bishop in July 2003.**

**There will be an annual Mass in the diocese (usually on Pentecost Sunday) for the confirmation of adults.** This will take place either at the Cathedral or at Walsingham.

## Follow-Up to Confirmation

"It is necessary that there be a follow-up of those who have received confirmation for, at least, a year after they have received the sacrament. Various appropriate works should be provided for them in the parish, and they can be incorporated into apostolic movements which suit their age so that they might live the grace of confirmation concretely in their lives"

*(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p. 46)*

No matter how well we prepare young people for Confirmation, and how well the Confirmation is celebrated, good follow-up is essential if they are to be drawn more deeply into the life, liturgy and work of the Church.

- **A post-Confirmation group** is strongly recommended, perhaps meeting monthly, and combining 'faith, food and fun.' Such a group could explore and put into action practical ideas for bringing the good news to others, e.g. through care projects, work for justice and peace, involvement in the liturgy.
- **An anniversary card** could be sent to each person from the parish on the first anniversary of their Confirmation.
- **A first anniversary reunion Mass** in the parish, with a celebration (e.g. barbecue) afterwards could be organised, perhaps with involvement from previous Confirmation groups.
- The diocese is exploring the possibility of an **annual diocesan Mass for young people confirmed during the previous year (or years).**

## EUCCHARIST

"At the heart of the life of the Catholic Church has always been the celebration of the Eucharist, or the Mass as Catholics often call it. Taking part in the Mass is the hallmark of the Catholic, central and crucial to our Catholic identity... For Catholics now, as in the past, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. It is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does, because at its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, continuing and making available his saving work among us"(Catholic Bishops of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales in *One Bread One Body*, 1998, no. 3).

Everything said above about the importance of the Mass is true also for our diocesan family, for every parish in our diocese, and for every small community, family and individual in each parish. This is why we need to find ways in our imminent future

with fewer priests to ensure that the Mass itself remains the heart of our Catholic life. No other forms of worship, even those which include the distribution of Holy Communion, can substitute for the Mass as the memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ. If the Sacrifice of the Mass is to remain the centre of our Catholic life together, all of us - priests and people together - will have to be sacrificial and generous, flexible and adaptable, in our attitude to where and when we can get to Mass each Sunday.

The Mass is the celebration of a pilgrim people, a community on the move. At the end of each Mass, like the people of Israel at the end of the first Passover Meal, the Lord tells us to 'Go forth', to 'Go forward'. We set off to continue our pilgrim journey, nourished by the new manna from heaven, the Bread of Life himself.

It is the Risen Lord who calls us to gather for the Eucharist, who draws us deeper into his life, and who sends us out into the world to bring his presence to others. The Risen Jesus in person is the heart of the Mass. It is the person of the Divine Word who says to us of the Scripture readings: 'Take and read'. It is the Saviour himself who says to us of his Body and Blood, 'Take and eat', 'Take and drink'. Each time we come to Mass, the Lord says to us: 'Come to me', 'Follow me' and 'Go in my name'.

But there is more to the Mass than the 'here and now'. In some mysterious way, made possible by the overshadowing presence of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Supper we celebrate is a foretaste of the Great Banquet of heaven. All who come to Mass should catch a glimpse of what heaven will be like. Now there's a challenge to all who lead and minister and participate at every celebration of Mass in our diocese. How can we make each Mass more 'heavenly', a true foretaste of the communion of saints awaiting us at the end of time?

"This major sacrament requires a special effort of the Church so that the Eucharist and its celebration take their proper place in the believing community. In addition to the daily Mass, which must not become simply a habit, the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday must receive special attention. This pastoral activity includes: serious preparation for Sunday so that it might be a weekly Easter celebration in the life of the faithful (suitable time for Sunday and daily Mass, the homily and its delivery and content speak to the life of the listeners, preparation of the texts in fluent and suitable language, appropriate songs, simple gestures and initiatives which might break the routine and fill the celebration with life and vitality)."(*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, p. 47)

## **The Celebration of Mass**

Like every other aspect of the life and mission of the Church, our liturgy is always open to renewal. **Mass can be celebrated better** - more prayerfully, more fruitfully, with more active and conscious participation by all, and with better homilies by the celebrant (bishop included).

The whole congregation can prepare better for Sunday Mass by **reflecting prayerfully on the Scripture readings** during the previous week, and by their prayerful 'coming to quiet' before Mass begins.

Mass can so easily become too full of words. Times of prayerful **silence** should be part of the Eucharist, for example after a Scripture reading or after Holy Communion. We need to learn how to be silent in a positive way, and to welcome silence as the voice of God.

`**Noble simplicity**' was key to the Second Vatican Council's approach to renewing much of the liturgy. There is plenty of room for beauty in the liturgy, making full use of the wonder of creation and the talents of God's people. The Catholic Church embraces the part played by the senses in our human response to God in worship, for example in art, architecture and music. But `noble simplicity' excludes all forms of ostentation.

The Mass is a sacramental liturgy, **full of sacred signs**. The most should be made of those signs in the spirit of `noble simplicity'. For example, always in keeping with the official rubrics, the reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds is encouraged (cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 100). Moreover, people should receive hosts at Mass consecrated at that same Mass: care should be taken to consecrate enough bread at Mass for all present (cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 89). The reserved sacrament should be used only once hosts consecrated at that Mass have been distributed.

The Ministry of the Word is an important service at Mass. Careful selection and adequate training is needed for those who undertake this ministry (Readers). It is also suggested that Ministers of the Word be commissioned in some way, and have their commissioning renewed in the same way as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The diocese will offer to parishes, clusters and deaneries opportunities for training and ongoing formation for Readers, and strongly recommends that parishes hold an annual renewal of commissioning for readers (perhaps at Mass on Bible Sunday - the second Sunday of Advent).

Parish readers on the rota for the following Sunday are encouraged to meet to reflect on the Scripture readings so that they have a good understanding of what they are reading. Such a gathering could be open to other parishioners.

**Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** play an important role when needed in assisting priests and deacons in distributing Holy Communion at Mass and to the sick. In our diocese, anyone taking on such a ministry must be invited by their parish priest; attend both parish training and a diocesan commissioning day; and be commissioned by the Bishop (for one year, renewable on an annual basis by the parish priest). Anyone in School Year 10 and above who has been confirmed may be a minister.

Our diocese warmly welcomes girls and women as **altar servers** alongside boys and men, at the discretion of the local parish priest. Most parishes already give positive affirmation and thanks to their altar servers in some way each year (e.g. special Mass with renewal of commitment, special events, parties, etc). The diocese is currently considering an annual diocesan event for altar servers.

## Ministry of Music at Mass

Many people in our parishes place their diverse musical talents at the service of the Church's worship, and this generosity is accepted and welcomed. **Music** plays a very important part in the celebration of the liturgy, especially Sunday Mass. There is certainly a place for choirs, singers and musicians to contribute their own specialist gifts to the liturgy, but the primary ministry of church musicians of any kind is to promote the active participation of the whole people: 'Through suitable instruction and practices, the people should be gradually led to a fuller - indeed, to a complete - participation in those parts of the singing which pertain to them' (Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Instruction on Sacred Music*, 1967, n. 3b).

Particularly highlighted for being sung by everyone are the 'Kyrie' ('of its nature it is a cry of the people of God for his mercy') and the 'Sanctus' which should be sung or said by 'the entire congregation, in union with the heavenly powers'; 'the voices of all should join in with that of the priest' (General Instruction on the Roman Missal, 1969, nos. 30, 55, 108, 168). The 'Agnus Dei' should usually be sung with the people responding, rather than by a choir on its own (*ibid*, no. 56).

There is, of course, much room at Mass for the great heritage of Catholic sacred music, including plainsong and polyphony, but the norms above are meant to ensure that the whole congregation is allowed to take its full active part as the community at worship.

One final point about music at Sunday Mass is highlighted by Pope John Paul in his letter *Dies Domini*: 'efforts must be made to ensure that the celebration (of Sunday Mass) has the festive character appropriate to the day commemorating the Lord's Resurrection. To this end, it is important to devote attention to the songs used by the assembly, since singing is a particularly apt way to express a joyful heart, accentuating the solemnity of the celebration and fostering the sense of a common faith and a shared love' (*Dies Domini*, n. 50).

## REDISCOVERING SUNDAY

### SACRAMENT OF EASTER

It may seem strange to find 'Sunday' in a Diocesan Pastoral Plan, but Sunday is the Lord's Day, and it is the special day for any Church family. In 1998, Pope John Paul II wrote an inspiring letter on keeping the Lord's Day holy (*Dies Domini*): 'Sunday is a day which is at the very heart of the Christian life'. The Holy Father strongly urges everyone 'to rediscover Sunday' (n. 7).

It is true, of course, that our way of life today is radically different even to a few decades ago. For many people, Sunday is no longer a day of rest. Increasingly, it is no different to any other day. And yet as human beings we need a day each week when we can stop, slow down, recover our energies and spend quality time with those we love. And as Christians, we need to **keep Sunday special**, to do all we can to preserve or restore the place of Sunday in our personal and family lives.

**At the heart of a Catholic Sunday is the celebration of Mass.** There we celebrate the wonder of our creation by God, and the wonder of our re-creation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At Mass, the Risen Christ gathers us together around himself, unites us more closely with himself, draws us into his sacrifice of himself, and nourishes us with the gift of himself. 'For the Christian, Sunday is above all an Easter celebration, wholly illumined by the glory of the Risen Christ' (Pope John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, n. 8). St Augustine called Sunday 'a sacrament of Easter'.

**Each family is asked to take a fresh look at how they spend the Lord's Day.** Could it be more of a day when the family is together? Is there a family meal together? Can we make it more of a day when we take our much-needed Sabbath rest? And how central is the celebration of Mass to our Sundays? Is it - as the Second Vatican Council puts it - the 'source and summit of our Christian lives'?

Pope John Paul teaches us that 'the community aspect of the Sunday celebration should be particularly stressed' because 'nothing is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist' (*Dies Domini*, n. 35). What can our parishes do to highlight the place of Sunday in the lives of the Catholic community? The Mass is the heart of it all, but other forms of prayer and social gatherings may also help. Efforts must be made to ensure that there is 'within the parish a lively sense of community, in the first place through the community celebration of Sunday Mass' (*Dies Domini*, n. 35).

**Because of this community aspect of Sunday Mass, and our preparation for an imminent future with fewer priests, it is diocesan policy that there should only be as many places of worship and celebrations of Mass in each parish as are really needed rather than preferred.** For some practical guidelines, see page 65. Priests need permission from the Bishop to say more than one Mass each day, and they may not celebrate more than three Masses on any day (with Sunday beginning on Saturday evening). See *Code of Canon Law*, canon 905.

The ideal remains a single celebration of Mass for each parish family.

As the Holy Father points out, liturgical directives ask that 'on Sundays and holy days the Eucharistic celebrations held normally in other churches and chapels be coordinated with the celebration in the parish church, in order "to foster the sense of the Church community, which is nourished and expressed in a particular way by the community celebration on Sunday, whether around the Bishop, especially in the cathedral, or in the parish assembly, in which the pastor represents the Bishop"' (*Dies Domini*, n. 35).

This is why 'on Sunday, the day of gathering, small group Masses are not to be encouraged' (*Dies Domini*, n. 36).

This also applies to the celebration of Mass with a small congregation in the parish church or elsewhere on a Sunday. Unless there is a real pastoral need, or the church cannot hold the entire community at one Mass, the parish family should gather at a single celebration of Mass.

Clearly in our modern society many factors need to be taken into account. Distance is a particular challenge in our diocese. But working towards a single Sunday Mass is

not simply a practical necessity for a future with fewer priests: it is something suggested by the very nature of the Sunday Mass as the gathering of God's family.

**Above all, every Sunday Mass should be a celebration of Easter, a celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord.** That simple teaching may challenge the way we celebrate Sunday Mass. As already stated earlier, Pope John Paul reminds us that `efforts must be made to ensure that the celebration (of Sunday Mass) has the festive character appropriate to the day commemorating the Lord's Resurrection. He highlights the importance of `the joy of the weekly Easter' if we are to rediscover the full meaning of Sunday.

What can everyone involved in the liturgy - including priests, musicians, welcomers, and each member of the congregation - do to enhance Sunday as a day of joy and Sunday Mass as a celebration full of the joy of Easter?

### **Services of the Word & Holy Communion**

As we continue to discuss the use of "**Celebrations of the Word and Communion**" in our diocese, especially as the number of priests declines, we will need to take full account of the various statements from Rome on this issue. (e.g. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* nos. 162-167).

Only when the celebration of the Eucharist is impossible on a Sunday (either in the local church or at somewhere nearby) can another form of celebration be used (162, 164). In our diocese, with the current number of active and retired priests, "Celebration of the Word and Holy Communion" should be used only in emergency (for example the sudden illness of the priest with no supply possible at such short notice); permission must be sought first from either the Bishop or Vicar General.

We should also note, however, that *Redemptionis Sacramentum* does not encourage regular weekday celebrations of this kind (166); the Bishops are asked prudently to discern "whether Holy Communion ought to be distributed at such gatherings".

It also suggests that it is preferable not to have a single lay person lead the whole celebration (165). In the introduction to the authorised *Celebrations of the Word and Communion*, the rubrics recommend that "the leader does not exercise several ministries within one liturgy", and that the leader of such a service (although perhaps an already-commissioned Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion) should be assisted by other ministers such as readers, ministers of communion, musicians. Only "if necessary" should the leader read the Gospel.

The Bishops of England and Wales intend to discuss these issues together, but in the meantime all should take account of what is stated in *Redemptionis Sacramentum*.

### **First Reconciliation (Confession) and First Holy Communion**

First Holy Communion is not simply the great gift of receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus for the first time. It is also a sacrament of deeper initiation or welcome into the Church. A child should become more `churched' as a fruit of receiving Holy

Communion, and parents have the key responsibility for ensuring this happens by their own example of regular participation at Mass and receiving the sacraments.

**It is diocesan policy that First Holy Communion should be received in primary school Year 3 (the school year in which a child reaches the age of 8) or above.** A child's readiness for First Holy Communion will be decided by parents, child, priests and catechists together.

Catechists involved with First Confession and First Communion preparation are encouraged to explore the range of **programmes and materials available**, so that whatever is used best combines good Catholic teaching with a child-friendly approach appropriate for 7-8 year olds.

The Diocesan Commission for Evangelisation will explore available resources and provide **ongoing formation** as appropriate for First Confession and First Communion catechists.

**Parents** should be involved as fully as possible in their children's preparation for these sacraments. Adult formation sessions on Reconciliation and the Eucharist should always be part of any children's preparation programme. There are published preparation programmes which seek fully to involve parents in the whole process (e.g. Celebrating the Gift of Forgiveness and Celebrating the Gift of Jesus).

Children and parents should be encouraged to be involved on a regular basis in Sunday Mass. **Suitably prepared liturgies** during the preparation programme (e.g. an Inscription Mass) can help them to feel more 'at home' at church and part of the parish family. The children can read the Scripture readings and intercessions, bring up the gifts, hold candles beside those distributing Communion, etc.

Because First Holy Communion is a rite of deeper initiation into the church, usually between Baptism and Confirmation, it should as far as possible **take place within the setting of the parish family** rather than a special Mass for First Communion children and their families alone. In a small parish, there is little problem with having First Communions at an ordinary Sunday Mass. When there are large numbers, some parishes have found it better to divide up the children over a number of Sundays at the main parish Masses; this is then followed by a 'Solemn Communion' Mass a week or so later when all the children come together and are handed their certificates, followed by a party. Such an approach can help children and their parents to focus on the spiritual dimension of the actual First Communion celebration.

As with all sacraments, **follow-up** is important for children who have made their First Holy Communion. There should be parish activities which pro-actively seek to involve them (Brownies, Cub Scouts, children's groups, etc). Children who have made their First Communion can also be invited after a few months to become altar servers.

As part of our diocesan and parish concern for child protection, if the photos of First Communion children are to be displayed in the church, hall or other public place, no child's name (even Christian name) should be identified in any way with any photo.

## **FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION (Confession)**

The Sacrament of Forgiveness and Reconciliation is one of the Lord's great gifts to us. It is a Sacrament of Resurrection by which the Risen Lord raises sinners from the death of sin and leads them forward on the path of holiness. It is a sacrament of liberation and healing, involving a deeply personal encounter with Christ the Reconciler through the priest in the community of the Church.

There is little doubt that Catholics in our country celebrate this sacrament much less frequently than was the custom in the past, but it is often celebrated today in a way which is more evidently a powerfully healing encounter with Christ the Good Shepherd. For many people, it is a sacrament of conversion, a vital part of our life-long journey from sin to holiness. For some, it is very much a sacrament of 'return' in which the Father welcomes back his prodigal sons and daughters with an embrace of love, replacing the cloak of holiness around them, putting a ring on their finger, and celebrating their return with joy.

This sacrament has many names: penance, confession, forgiveness. For all of us, whether our failings be great or small, it is a sacrament of reconciliation, making present the fruits of the great gift of Reconciliation between God and the world that Christ has achieved by his death and resurrection. Calling the sacrament 'Reconciliation' also reminds us that sin and holiness are never a private affair: sin impairs our relationship with others as well as with God; forgiveness reconciles us to one another as well as to the Lord.

Our Catholic communities and our personal Christian lives are the poorer without this sacrament, and we need to put some careful thought into how we can best encourage people to return to its celebration.

**The diocesan focus for 2005 will be the Sacrament of Forgiveness and Reconciliation**, along with a special outreach to those Catholics we often call 'lapsed' but many of whom are awaiting an invitation to 'come home'. This will include special prayers and liturgies, a pastoral letter and literature. There will also be an ongoing formation day on the topic for priests, led by Bishop Michael.

**Every parish is asked to look at the way this sacrament is celebrated.** Is it at the best time for people? Could the special place for the celebration of sacrament be made more prayerful? Is full use made of the Rite of Penance, or is our confessional practice (as priests and penitents) little different from days of old? The emphasis should be on a joyous, welcoming and peaceful atmosphere.

**More positive teaching and preaching** is needed in parishes on reconciliation in general and on the sacrament in particular.

**Rite 2** (Communal Rite of Reconciliation with individual confessions) should be used more frequently in order to emphasise the communal nature of sin and reconciliation. It is widely thought that Rite 2 is the most appropriate celebration for First Reconciliation: after a simple liturgy, those priests available could sit at different places in the church rather than in the Reconciliation Room, with appropriate 'covering' music in the background to ensure privacy (Taize music is particularly

useful for this). Children could each light a candle or votive light and place it before the altar after being reconciled.

Similar services are appropriate before First Holy Communion, and during primary school years until they are more ready for Rite 1 (Rite of Reconciliation with individual penitents). Such communal celebrations (perhaps organised at deanery or cluster level in order to ensure a number of priests) should be made available at high points of the liturgical year, and especially during Lent and Advent.

Before celebrating Reconciliation for the first time (First Confession), children and their parents could be invited to **special celebrations of God's forgiving love**, informal liturgies focusing on God's unconditional love and readiness to forgive (e.g. using the Parable of the Prodigal son).

## **ANOINTING OF THE SICK**

This sacrament is also a sacrament of 'communion' with the Church: it helps keep the sick and elderly 'in touch' with the life of the church. Perhaps the best way to highlight this understanding is the public celebration of the Anointing of the Sick. Pope John Paul's celebration of anointing at St George's Cathedral, Southwark was one of the most moving moments of his visit to Britain in 1982.

There is already an annual diocesan celebration of the Anointing of the Sick at Walsingham during the SVP Pilgrimage of the Sick.

**The diocese recommends an annual parish or cluster Mass with the Anointing of the Sick.** Any such Mass needs to be sensitive to the needs of the sick, especially regarding the length of the Mass. A simple social afterwards can help to make the sick feel a sense of belonging to the parish family.

The sick and housebound are always a primary focus for the pastoral care of the Church, as they can all too easily become cut off from the spiritual life of the Church, especially from the Mass. Receiving Holy Communion keeps them 'in communion' with Christ and the Church, and their own life of prayer and witness is gift of tremendous richness for the parish community.

## **HOLY MATRIMONY**

The number of marriages in Catholic churches in East Anglia has declined considerably in recent decades. Many people are already questioning the future of the institution of marriage. And yet being married remains the main way most Catholics live out their Confirmation calling to give public witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Our diocesan approach to the support of marriage and family life needs to take full account of the fact that few marriages nowadays are between two practising Catholics. Great sensitivity and welcome must be shown to the spouse and parent who is not a Catholic. We can sometimes be too demanding of such situations, and it can be very difficult for some Catholics to live in full the Church's vision of marriage and family. It can be particularly difficult for the Catholic parent to share their faith with

their children, and hand on to them the Good News of Jesus Christ. And yet we also need to acknowledge warmly those non-Catholic husbands and wives who give such generous support to their Catholic spouses in the upbringing of their children in the Catholic faith. Many come to Mass with their families on Sundays, and become key members of the parish family. They are warmly welcome, and a blessing to our Catholic communities.

As Christ's Church, we need to support married couples and families, during good times and bad. We must be a caring family for the widowed, separated and divorced, for single parents, and for single people in general. But we must also present Christian marriage as a great gift of God's joyful love to our world, as well as giving special care to preparing couples for marriage.

**Priests** are asked to use every suitable opportunity to preach the positive and joyful meaning of Christian marriage.

Care and time needs to be given to **long-term preparation** for married life in general and the sacrament of marriage in particular. Our Catholics schools have a vital part to play in this process. There should be more preaching and teaching about the distinctive Christian understanding of marriage in our parishes. Full use should be made of opportunities for such teaching, for example during Confirmation preparation programmes, youth retreats and missions, etc. A positive appreciation of and desire for marriage can only be brought about through developing a general **culture of vocation** among our young people.

Care also needs to be given to **immediate preparation** for marriage. Such preparation includes the necessary paper-work and organising the wedding ceremony, but the heart of all preparation should be a positive presentation of the meaning of the sacrament of marriage within the setting of the couple's relationship with God, their vocation from him, and their involvement in the community of the Church. In addition, short courses for couples preparing for marriage are provided by **Marriage Care** from their various centres across the diocese.

The Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life will explore and provide information on other forms of support for couples preparing for marriage and living their marriage (e.g. Engaged Encounter, Marriage Encounter, Teams of Our Lady).

The diocese will seek to give more support to **Marriage Care**, whose professionally-trained marriage counsellors offer counselling for those with marital and relationship difficulties. Most of their centres provide information on fertility awareness and instruction on natural methods of family planning.

More education needs to be given on the principles and methods of **Natural Family Planning**. There are contact addresses in the Diocesan Year Book.

In a country where the birth rate is declining and the average age of the population increasing, the Catholic Church has a vital role to play in promoting the **vocation to parenthood** and the gift of children as a blessing from God for the future of humanity.

**Every celebration of marriage should be a community celebration.** The names of couples preparing for marriage should be included in the Intercessions at Mass, and the dates and times of weddings announced in the parish newsletter. Couples could be encouraged to celebrate their engagement with a prayer and blessing in church.

When one of the couple is a committed member of another Christian community, a priest or minister of that community may be invited to take some part in the rite of marriage, while leaving the Catholic priest or deacon to perform the central elements of the rite (cf. *Directory on Ecumenism*, no 158).

The **follow-up** to the celebration of marriage is particularly important. If a couple are to move elsewhere after marriage, their details should be forwarded to the local parish priest. The church community needs to explore ways to support newly-married couples during their first few years of marriage and of parenthood. The Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life will continue the discussion of such topics begun at 'Listening 2004'.

**Every parish should provide an annual opportunity for the renewal of marriage vows.** If this takes place at Sunday Mass, special sensitivity should be shown to those present who are separated, divorced, experiencing marriage difficulties, widowed or single. An annual Jubilees Mass in each parish, cluster or deanery is also strongly recommended. Such a celebration could take place on a Summer weekday evening, and be followed by simple refreshments. Those celebrating significant wedding anniversaries are invited to celebrate and renew their marriage commitment. This could also be combined with others celebrating special jubilees (e.g. ordination, religious life).

**Special care and welcome needs to be given to people who are separated and divorced, or experiencing marriage difficulties.** Some parishes establish supports for such people. The Association of Separated and Divorced Catholics has various representatives across the diocese (see the Diocesan Year Book).

**The whole community life of the parish,** with its liturgy and social life, should be supportive of marriage and family life precisely by seeking to be as inclusive as possible, as well as providing special groups and events for different age-groups (e.g. young wives, mothers and toddlers, etc). A parish baby-sitting circle may be much appreciated.

Many of these issues will be taken up by a restored **Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life** resulting from the 'Listening 2004' process in our diocese.

## **DIOCESAN MARRIAGE TRIBUNAL**

It is sometimes possible for people to move on from their current situation of irregular relationships (e.g. being divorced and re-married) and so take a full part in the life of the Church. The Diocesan Marriage Tribunal is our pastoral team of experienced and qualified canon lawyers who handle the investigation and judgement of marriage cases for nullity. The Tribunal can be contacted directly and confidentially at:

Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, 21 Uppgate, Poringland, Norwich NR14 7SH  
or by [e-mail](#)

## **HOLY ORDERS**

### **a prayer for priestly vocations**

Father,  
in your plan for our salvation  
you provide shepherds for your people.  
Fill your Church  
with the spirit of courage and love.  
Raise up worthy ministers for your altars,  
and ardent but gentle servants of the gospel.

*Roman Missal*

At the heart of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan is the greater involvement of lay people in the life of the Catholic Church in East Anglia at every level. That Church will not remain Catholic, however, without the ministry of those set aside by the Sacrament of Holy Orders to be Bishop, Priests and Deacons. We are by nature a deeply sacramental church, and ordained ministry is an essential gift from Christ to his Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church sums up much of the Second Vatican Council's teaching: 'In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, High Priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth' (1548); 'Through the ordained minister, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers' (1549).

As a Catholic community, we are those from among whom Christ will call people to serve him as priests and deacons. One reason we will have fewer priests in our diocese in the future is that few parishes have 'provided' priests for the service of the Church. We must therefore keep vocations in our prayers, and care as best we can for the priests and deacons we already have.

### **Vocations**

**Our Catholic schools** have a vital role to play in creating a culture of vocation, and in presenting a positive view of priestly ministry to our young people. The school should be a place where children and young people meet and get to know their priests, and where they are taught to understand the special ministry of the priest. Young people should be encouraged, as they begin to think about their futures and careers, their hopes and dreams, to ask what God might be calling them to do with the gifts he has given them, and explicitly and positively to include ordained ministry and religious life among the possibilities. School chaplains and careers advisors have an important role to play.

It is contact with the **local priest** which is most likely to make a young person first think about the priesthood. Every priest has a key role to play in presenting the priesthood as a joyful and fulfilling way to live one's life.

"A positive presentation of priestly ministry - good role models - will speak more loudly than words"(*individual response*)

**Prayer for vocations is vital.** Every parish has been asked to have regular times of prayer specifically for vocations to ordained ministry and religious life, as well as including the intention in the Intercessions at Mass. Our vocations team will continue to produce suitable materials for prayer, alongside the National Vocations Office.

Without putting undue pressure on them, seminary students from our diocese have a role to play in presenting the possibility of a priestly vocation to young people in our diocese, both in our schools and parishes.

Thought will be given to a new **vocations exhibition** for use in schools and parishes.

## **Celebrating Ordination**

**It is diocesan policy that all priestly and diaconal ordinations take place at the cathedral unless there is a very strong pastoral or personal reason for another venue. Any priest or deacon is ordained firstly for service of the diocese (cf. Code of Canon Law, canons 1010 & 1011).**

**A special celebration can later be held in the home parish of the person who has been ordained (‘First Mass’, etc).**

Because of the essentially collegial nature of ordination, all the priests of the diocese are to be invited to every priestly ordination, and all deacons (and their wives) to every ordination to the permanent diaconate.

The order of service for any ordination should be arranged in full liaison with the Bishop and the Cathedral Dean.

## **Ongoing Formation**

**All ordained ministers need ongoing spiritual renewal and formation throughout their time of service. This is not an optional extra, but a pastoral necessity (cf. Canon 279).**

**Our current programme of ongoing formation** for priests will be reviewed and renewed, primarily through discussions at deanery meetings.

Priests and deacons are expected to make an annual retreat. More needs to be provided for the **spiritual renewal** of our priests, through the provision of the opportunity for a diocesan retreat for priests, as well as occasional days of reflection. From 2005, the diocese will organise a study and social week and a priests' retreat in alternate years.

Work begun a few years ago on **regular review (or appraisal) of ministry** for priests needs to be taken up again and put into place after due consultation.

Greater opportunity for **sabbaticals** should be provided, within the limitations inevitably imposed by a declining number of priests. The increased pressures on priests precisely because of that decline may well make such sabbaticals more important.

## **Deacons**

Deacons are ordained as sacramental images of Christ the Servant, to assist the bishop and priests of the diocese in their ministry. The Diocesan College of Deacons is already a significant body in the life of the diocese. The diaconal ministry is flexible, as it adjusts to the particular needs of the church at a particular time and place.

The present and future role of deacons in providing pastoral guidance and care to worshipping communities with no resident priest needs further discussion, with clear guidelines to be established. Deacons entrusted with such a service will always minister as assistants of the parish priest responsible for such communities. This is important in order to preserve the distinctive ministry of the deacon as a positive gift to the life of the diocese.

Deacons currently assist in a range of special chaplaincy work (in prisons and hospitals, with the police, etc) as well as working with priests and people in parishes. These forms of service can be developed within the limitations of deacons' available time and energy, and always being fully sensitive to their family lives and forms of employment.

The vocation to the diaconate will be included in all our **prayer for vocations**. We hope to expand the College of Deacons and develop the ministry of Deacons according to the needs of the diocese.

**The selection, formation, discernment and ongoing formation** of all deacons will be carried out in full accordance with the Bishops' Conference *Directory for the Formation of Deacons* and *Handbook for the Selection of Candidates for the Permanent Diaconate*.

Deacons in East Anglia are asked to make their primary focus their **'ministry of charity'**, and to seek to enable lay people to become more actively involved in practical care for those in need, and for justice and peace.

## **Care for the Clergy**

Those who lead and serve our parishes as ordained ministers need ongoing care and support - from the bishop and his team, from one another, and from the communities they serve. Parish priests in particular are often overstretched and overburdened. There is an increasing danger of the 'privatisation' of the priesthood and the isolation of our priests as most now live and work alone. The burdens on priests have increased during the 'Forward & Outward Together' process, but the hope is that some of the

changes proposed in this plan will give priests more support so that they can exercise even more fruitfully a joyful and fulfilling ministry in our diocese.

"The mission placed on the shoulder of the parish priest requires also that he be taken care of. He needs human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral support from the ecclesial hierarchy, from his brother priests and from the faithful, especially from the committed faithful. Of course, this does not absolve the priest from taking care of himself in order to renew his gifts continually. This support must take the form of great solicitude for the basic and invaluable diocesan treasure represented by the parish priest:

- **spiritual care**, whereby he finds sufficient time to be with his Lord, who loves him, calls him and sanctifies him (spiritual retreats, both monthly and yearly, prayer, meditation and liturgical prayer, persevering in reading and meditating on the Word of God...) so that he does not lose his identity as a man of God and servant of the believing community;
- **human care**, whereby he preserves his human and social equilibrium, not being exposed to despair, disillusion and depression in a society which no longer supports him as it once did in the past; he must, therefore, allow himself sufficient time to renew his spiritual and bodily strength;
- **pastoral care**, whereby he receives permanent and serious formation, enabling him to understand what is happening around him in the Church and in society so that he is able to take appropriate initiatives. This pastoral care must provide the priests with instruments and means to facilitate pastoral work amidst the numerous and manifold demands all around him;
- **cultural, theological and human care**, whereby he does not get cut off from the Church or from society, through the regular organisation of programmes which include these dimensions of the life of the priest;
- **material care**, which measures up to the criteria of his needs as well as to the criteria of his vocation, mission and witness, so that he can make himself completely available for his basic mission in the parish.

The accompaniment of the parish priest, in love, tenderness and paternal support, helping him to understand the challenges, innovations, calls and responses, is a priority in the life of the diocese. "Do not neglect the spiritual gift which is in you" (1 Timothy 4.14), "that is why I am exhorting you to fan into a flame the gift that God gave you with the laying on of hands" 2 Timothy 1.6). "Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you, watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock can follow. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of glory" (1 Peter 5.2-4). (*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, p. 101-102)

The spiritual, human, pastoral, intellectual and material care of our clergy is vital for the future of our diocese. The Bishop has primary responsibility for such care, assisted especially by the Deans. The mutual support which flows from the brotherhood of priests is an essential dimension of such care, and this is a key reason for the deanery structure and the clustering of parishes.

Priests are entitled and encouraged to take a weekly 'day off'. Ideally this should be arranged in liaison with neighbouring parishes so that a nearby priest can be available

in emergency: the name and phone number of the priest or priests who are `covering' should be included in any answer-phone message. Such liaison is also important when arranging holidays, particularly when no full-time `supply' has been arranged. A priest's entitlement to time away from the parish is clearly stipulated in the Code of Canon Law; the same applies for assistant priests as for parish priests.

Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, the parish priest may each year be absent on holiday from his parish for a period not exceeding one month, continuous or otherwise. The days which the parish priest spends on the annual spiritual retreat are not reckoned in this period of vacation. For an absence from the parish of more than a week, however, the parish priest is bound to advise the local Ordinary.' (*Canon 533 # 2*)

All forms of **priestly fraternity** and mutual support are strongly encouraged. Some priests may wish to organise support groups, perhaps focused on a shared interest. Priests within a `cluster' will hopefully visit each other and meet for a meal occasionally. `Faith, food and fun' are as important for our priests as they are for our young people. Such `clusters' provide a good setting for the care of sick and retired priests who live within one or other of the clustered parishes.

**The Bishop** asks priests whether there are ways he personally can provide additional opportunities for priests to come together in small groups for friendship and fraternity.

Special care and support needs to be given to **newly-ordained clergy**, especially during the first five years of ministry. The Bishop will meet regularly with newly-ordained priests. The Director of the Permanent Diaconate and his team will support newly-ordained permanent deacons.

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**A Diocesan Clergy Welfare Group** has been established to monitor aspects of practical care for clergy currently unable to work, of those in financial need, and those in retirement. This group will liaise with the East Anglia Sick and Retired Priests' Fund.

More care must be given to long-term support for priests **preparing for retirement.**

A 'portfolio' is being compiled of parishes and other properties in the diocese suitable as **places for active retirement for priests.**

**The Diocesan Sick and Retired Priests Fund, and the Clergy Pension Fund,** need very considerable increase in income if we are to be confident about providing an appropriate future for our priests when they retire.

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## **RELIGIOUS LIFE**

'All religious, whether exempt or not, take their place among the collaborators of the diocesan bishop in his pastoral duty' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 927). All religious communities in East Anglia are an integral part of the diocese, each with their own particular charisms and contribution to the life of our diocesan family and the wider church.

**Regular area meetings** will be held between religious and the Bishop, focusing on a particular theme. These meetings will feed into the **annual Diocesan Meeting** of religious which provides a forum for all religious in the diocese.

The possibility will be explored of establishing a **Diocesan Vocations Team** to include vocations both to religious life and ordained ministry.

Individual religious should be kept in mind when seeking people with particular charisms and talents for **special service in the church**, whether in parish, cluster, deanery or diocese. Many are already very busy, and making full use of a wide range of skills.

The presence of religious communities, however small, is a **gift of God** to our diocese and its parishes. They provide places of prayer and welcome, a 'warm hearth' at the heart of the church with an influence far beyond their numbers. Religious are now often in a special position to enable lay people to become more responsibly involved in the life of the church.

Religious should be positively **invited and welcomed** to all parish events, ceremonies, etc.

## **FINANCES**

**It is diocesan policy that there be full openness and transparency about finances at every level (parish, diocese, etc).**

This was something asked for in nearly all parish and deanery responses to 'Forward & Outward Together', and it is important that the stewards of our diocesan resources respond as fully as possible. Such transparency is part of the gift of trust which is so essential between priests and people.

**What has also become very clear is the need for the diocese to move towards greater financial stability and security.** If we are to develop our diocese in the way envisaged by this Diocesan Pastoral Plan, further financial resources will be needed. But even just to maintain our diocese, its parishes and schools at our present level, it is essential that we increase our giving to the Church.

**Most parishioners are aware that a large proportion of the money given each week in the collection is sent to the Diocesan Finance Office.** This proportion may have to increase. At the moment, a total of 33% of the offertory collection goes to central diocesan funds: 20% of this supports our Catholic schools; 4% goes into the Priests' Pension Fund; 1% to the Ministerial Formation Fund (which now includes lay formation); 8% goes into the General Diocesan Fund.

We should not think of this as money sent from our parish communities to some outside body we call the diocese. Each parish is an integral part, a living cell of the diocese, and we are all together one single diocesan family of East Anglia.

Just as in the early church, Christian communities share what they have with one another, and support each other.

Our diocese has few central funds, and most of the resources of the diocese are vested in its parishes. It is therefore important that parishes continue to support the mission and ministry of the whole diocesan family, and that they even be urged to do so more generously in the future than they have in the past.

**Priests and people sometimes express concern about the number of second collections in our diocese.** Some are required either by Rome or by our Bishops Conference (Catholic Education Service; Holy Land Shrines; Catholic Communications Service; Catholic Trust for England and Wales; Peter's Pence; Apostleship of the Sea; Association for the Propagation of the Faith; CAFOD): all of these support the Catholic Church throughout England and Wales, including our diocese, and the work of the Church across the world. Others directly support essential activities in our own diocese (Catholic Children's Society; Ministerial Training; St Edmund's Fund; Diocesan Youth Service; Sick & Retired Priests Fund).

**One major expense in every diocese is the care of sick and retired priests, and especially the provision of a pension for them on retirement.** The East Anglia Sick and Retired Priests Fund needs building up considerably, and the Priests Pension Fund in particular is severely short of money and needs a major injection of money each year in order to ensure proper care for our priests after their long years of service to our diocese and its parishes. **The Catholic Children's Society is also in need of increased funding if it is to continue its vital work in our schools and for our children.**

In all matters concerning the finances of our diocese and its parishes, the requirements of the **Charity Commission** will be fully implemented.

Canon Law requires every parish to have a **Finance Committee**. When fully developed, such committees provide a key way in which lay people can share responsibility for administration in the parish, relieving the parish priest so that he can concentrate on his pastoral and priestly ministry. Every parish is strongly encouraged to make full use of such a committee, perhaps by developing it into a Finance & Building Committee responsible not only for the parish finances but also the general oversight of the maintenance and repair of church properties. Such a committee should make full use of professionals in the parish: e.g. qualified accountants, people with banking experience, architect, solicitor, health & safety officer, etc.

The diocese will help parishes to make far more of the **Gift Aid Scheme**.

**A parish fund-raising committee** would help to increase parish income; this is essential when major parish projects are proposed.

**The diocese** will publish in full its annual accounts, making use of the diocesan newspaper and website (when established in a new form).

**Every parish** should publish its annual accounts, so that parishioners know where their money goes.

We need to find a way to increase very considerably annual funding for our **Priests Pension Fund**. This may require an increase of the money given each year from parish offertory collections to diocesan central funds.

The best way to increase diocesan funding is to **increase parish funding**. The more that is given each week in the collection, the greater the resources available for both the diocese and its parish communities. Many people are already very generous. Many

simply cannot give any more than they already do. **But everyone is asked to seriously budget what they give to their church, and to reflect on whether they could give more each week.** Could people who are employed give the equivalent of the wages for the first hour of each week's work, as the 'first-fruits' of their labour given to God and his Church? Or at least a reasonable percentage of their weekly wage? Although no-one should give to the church in a way that causes difficulties for themselves and their families, we may need a greater sense of being stewards of God's creation, responsible together for the life and work of his family.

Greater giving through **Standing Orders** is strongly encouraged.

People are encouraged to consider a **legacy** to the 'Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia', as a way of helping to ensure the long-term future of our diocesan family.

## **NEW STRUCTURES**

It may well be that this is where you have begun reading this Diocesan Pastoral Plan, skipping the previous 58 pages to discover what plans there are for your deanery, parish and place of worship. That is natural, but please do return to the beginning to read the rest afterwards. Although we need to streamline our structures and make them more effective, what is most important for our future is in the first part of this document.

## **DEANERIES**

**(from 13th September 2004)**

Although many lay people see little value in the deanery except for their clergy, it remains a key structure for enabling clergy and people to work together on a local basis (see page 27).

Further reflection during Deanery Meetings in the Spring and Summer of 2004 has led to the following changes in our current deaneries.

### **Bury St Edmunds Deanery**

This Deanery will remain as it was, but with the addition of Hadleigh. Some deanery activity will be done in the three main clusters rather than at deanery level.

### **Cambridge Deanery**

There will be no change to this deanery, but in much of its working, especially regarding pastoral planning and lay participation, it will operate as two 'sub-deaneries' or large clusters:

- Cambridge city parishes (OLEM; St Philip Howard; St Laurence), Ely and Sawston
- Buckden, Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neot's

## **Coastal Deanery**

This Deanery will remain as it was, but with the addition of Poringland.

## **Ipswich Deanery**

This Deanery will remain as it was, except that Hadleigh will move to the Bury St Edmunds Deanery.

## **King's Lynn & Norwich Deaneries**

Three Deaneries are to be formed from the previous King's Lynn and Norwich Deaneries.

- Poringland will move from the Norwich Deanery to the Coastal Deanery.
- Holy Apostles, Earlham, is to be integrated with the Cathedral; Burnham Market has already been integrated with Walsingham.
- Because it is clustering with Swaffham, Dereham will move from the Norwich to the King's Lynn Deanery.
- A new North Norfolk Deanery will be formed from the parishes of Cromer, Fakenham, North Walsham (now with Hoveton), Sheringham and Walsingham.

## **Peterborough Deanery**

This Deanery will remain as it was.

As a result of these changes, the diocese will have eight rather than seven deaneries.

### **Bury St Edmund's Deanery (St Edmund)**

Brandon; Bury St Edmunds; Clare; Diss; Hadleigh; Haverhill; Newmarket; Stowmarket; Sudbury; Thetford

### **Cambridge Deanery (St Andrew)**

Buckden; OLEM, Cambridge; St Laurence, Cambridge; St Philip Howard, Cambridge; Ely; Huntingdon; St Ives; St Neot's; Sawston.

### **Coastal Deanery (St Peter)**

Beccles; Bungay; Gorleston; Lowestoft; Poringland; Southwold; Great Yarmouth.

### **Ipswich Deanery (St Edward)**

Aldeburgh; Felixstowe; St James, Ipswich; St Mark, Ipswich; St Mary, Ipswich; St Mary Magdalen, Ipswich; St Pancras, Ipswich; Woodbridge

### **King's Lynn Deanery (St Wilfrid)**

Dereham, Downham Market, Hunstanton, King's Lynn, Swaffham; Wisbech.

### **Norwich Deanery (St Felix)**

Costessey; St John's Cathedral, Norwich; St George's, Norwich; Wymondham.

### **North Norfolk Deanery (St Henry Walpole)**

Cromer; Fakenham; North Walsham; Sheringham; Walsingham.

### **Peterborough Deanery (St Hugh)**

March; St Peter & All Souls, Peterborough; Our Lady of Lourdes & St Oswald, Peterborough; St Luke, Peterborough; Sacred Heart, Bretton; St Anthony's, Peterborough (Italian Mission); Polish Mission, Peterborough; Whittlesey

## **PARISH CHANGES - for change in 2004**

The current parish of **Holy Apostles, Earlham** is to be integrated as a distinct community within the Cathedral Parish, and served from there (from 13th September 2004).

The former parish of **Burnham Market** has already been integrated as a distinct community within the parish of Walsingham, and is now served from there. The priest's house is available for an active retired priest who could celebrate Mass for the community and share in pastoral care without the burden of administration. Alternatively, a lay administrator or a deacon could live there. Whoever takes up residence, however, needs to be ready to allow the main room to be used for parish gatherings.

The current parish of **North Walsham** is being expanded to include the part of St George's, Norwich, centred on St Helen's Church in Hoveton. It will be a parish with three places of worship: the parish church at North Walsham, and the churches at Aylsham and Hoveton. This will enable St George's parish to function with just one priest when necessary. This change is to take place in September 2004. Masses in North Walsham and Hoveton will need to be reduced and the times adjusted. As a short-term measure, priests from the Cathedral and St George's will assist with Sunday Masses until St Helen's Church can be expanded or another solution found. Parish boundaries will need to be redrawn.

**Watton** is to be transferred to Swaffham parish. Parish boundaries will need to be redrawn. (September 2004)

**Quidenham** is to return to Diss parish to which it originally belonged. Sunday Mass at Quidenham is dependent on the continuance of the Carmel there. Mass times in Diss & Quidenham should be harmonised. Parish boundaries will need to be redrawn. (September 2004)

**Hadleigh parish** has a total Mass attendance which would all fit into one Mass in the parish church in Hadleigh, and yet there are currently three Masses in three different places of worship each weekend (Hadleigh, Nayland and Withermarsh Green). There is naturally a strong attachment to St Edmund's in Withermarsh Green because of its Catholic heritage, but it is not in a centre of population. Strong views have been expressed and heard, but the process of clustering and the need for neighbouring priests to 'supply' for each other requires that the number of Masses and places of worship in Hadleigh parish be reduced to two (and possibly eventually to one). From the beginning of 2005, there will be only two Masses in Hadleigh parish.

**Withermarsh Green** will no longer have Mass every weekend. We very much hope

to retain the church for occasional celebrations of Mass and special events, preserving a long Catholic heritage and ensuring care for the graveyard. Mass times will need to be coordinated with neighbouring parishes, especially Sudbury.

In St Philip Howard parish, Cambridge, Mass will no longer be celebrated each weekend in the Anglican churches in **Fulbourn and Linton**. These two Masses will be replaced by an extra Mass at St Philip Howard. (September 2004)

Mass will no longer be celebrated weekly at **Stanground** (All Souls', Peterborough), **Lynford** (Thetford) or **Bowthorpe** (Costessey). Occasional Masses may be possible. (Summer 2004)

A new church is to be built at **Sawston** on the understanding that weekly Mass will no longer be celebrated in the Anglican churches at Hauxton and Great Shelford once the new church is built. The new church must be able to accommodate all at a single Mass.

**Any new or replacement churches to be built in the diocese will require the building to be large enough to accommodate the entire Mass attendance at a single Mass.**

### **PARISH CHANGES - for gradual change over the next few years**

The responses to 'Forward & Outward Together' have emphasised the need to be careful to preserve as fully as possible our diocesan service of rural communities. Our large towns/cities, however, offer possibilities for reducing the number of parishes and coordinating the times of Sunday Masses, not only to cope with fewer priests but also to create a better sense of Catholic community and mission. Ipswich and Peterborough deaneries in particular have given much thought to such possibilities

### **CAMBRIDGE CITY PARISHES**

Cambridgeshire is a fast-growing area, and special care needs to be taken to ensure pastoral care for new developments. The three city parishes, OLEM, St Philip Howard's & St Laurence's, along with Sawston, are asked to explore ways of working together in a more integrated way in their city-wide ministry. The proposed housing developments make it impossible to combine any of the city parishes. Parish boundaries may need adjustment. Chaplaincy provision for the hospital needs to be integrated into any overall plan.

Although OLEM currently serves a large number of outlying Mass centres, that is dependent on the number of priests currently resident there, a number which is likely to decrease. However desirable it may be to maintain most of those Masses, it is unlikely to remain viable to do so. OLEM needs to develop a strategy to cope with this in a phased way. It also needs to be kept in mind that Sawston (with one Mass) may one day need to be served from Cambridge.

## **NORWICH CITY PARISHES**

With the changes involving Holy Apostles, Earlham and St Helen's, Hoveton, both St John's Cathedral parish and St George's parish will already be 'mini-clusters' of three churches each (the Cathedral with Earlham & Lakenham; St George's with Hellesdon & Thorpe). The Saturday Mass at Bowthorpe ended in June 2004. The number and times of Masses at the Cathedral require radical review in the light of pastoral need rather than the number of priests available - if there is one church in the diocese where one Sunday Mass would be most certainly possible one day, this is it! With fewer Masses, the priests at the cathedral would be even more available for support in other parts of the diocese.

## **PETERBOROUGH CITY PARISHES**

Peterborough Deanery has given much thought to the possibility of reducing from the current five city parishes to either three or eventually one. The deanery has opted to move towards the creation of three new parishes with maximum sharing of personnel and resources. The three-parish model is based on the following re-structuring:

- St Oswald's and Sacred Heart, Bretton
- All Souls and Our Lady of Lourdes (with the Italian Mission fully integrated)
- St Luke's with Hampton, Yaxley and Sawtry.

There will need to be phased progress towards such changes, alongside the development of city-wide ministry and pooling of resources. A single city parish remains an option for the future which may emerge as a natural consequence of increased cooperation. The plan presumes that the Italian Mission will be sensitively integrated into the remaining parishes if and when they do not have their own Italian priest.

There will no longer be weekly Mass at Stanground. The position of Yaxley is being reviewed in the light of developments at Hampton. Parish boundaries will need to be redrawn.

Whittlesey may need to be included in long-term plans for the Peterborough city churches. The worshipping communities at Chatteris (March parish) and Ramsey (Whittlesey parish) will need careful attention, perhaps in liaison with Ely.

Chaplaincy provision for the hospital and prison needs to be integrated into any overall plan.

## **Ipswich Town Parishes**

- St Pancras & St Mary Magdalen's parishes could be combined into a single parish (with one mass at St Mary Magdalen's and two at St Pancras)
- The deanery is to give further thought to proposals for the future of Holy Family Church Kesgrave. For the time being it will remain part of St Mary's parish. Further suggestions include combination of Kesgrave with St James, and the possibility of linking St James with Felixstowe. All these options need

to be explored further in the light of housing developments over the next few years.

- Although the present arrangements at St Marks will continue for the foreseeable future, any future realignment of parishes in Ipswich will require a serious reassessment of the viability of Sunday Mass at Capel St Mary and Brantham.
- The Vigil Mass at the Royal hospital school will eventually be discontinued and any Catholic pupils transported to Mass in Mark's parish.

Chaplaincy provision for the hospitals and developing university needs to be integrated into any overall plan.

### **PARISHES TO COMBINE - only as this ever becomes necessary**

If the overall number of active priests in the diocese continues to fall, we will need to combine parishes in some way so that one or two priests can serve a number of churches. Our present and future retired priests would play a vital role in such a process.

Several combined parishes would inevitably involve the ending of weekly Mass in some places of worship, and a reduction in the number of Masses in the main churches. Some of those parishes would perhaps be served by one parish priest, but assisted on an informal basis by retired priests living in the parish.

If any such changes become necessary, it may not be possible to continue weekly Mass at various churches and other Mass centres. We need to be aware, however, of problems which could arise from closure of such centres and limited space in the main church.

Besides the proposals for the city parishes outlined above, the following parishes (in no significant order) are the most likely for the first stage of such a process. Others may follow.

- Cromer & Sheringham
- Dereham & Swaffham  
Any eventual combination would involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing Mass at Watton.
- Beccles & Bungay (the current Benedictine parishes), perhaps eventually with Poringland; Harleston could perhaps become part of Diss parish.  
Any eventual combination would involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing weekly Mass at Gillingham.
- Gorleston & Great Yarmouth Such a combination will make it difficult to retain both the Mass centres at Acle and Caister-on-Sea.
- Instead of above, possibly Gorleston, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft served by two priests at first rather than the current three. Any eventual combination involving Lowestoft will make it difficult to retain St Nicholas, Pakefield; Acle; Caister-on-Sea.
- Fakenham & Walsingham  
Such a combination would depend on the continued presence of large numbers of active retired priests in the parish of Walsingham, which already includes Blakeney, Burnham Market & Wells.
- Brandon/Mildenhall & Thetford

- March & Wisbech (the current Rosminian parishes).
- Instead of above, March, Wisbech & Whittlesey could be served by two priests rather than the current three. Chatteris might be served from Ely.
- St Mary Magdalen & St Pancras, Ipswich.
- Clare & Haverhill
- Hadleigh & Sudbury

Any eventual combination would involve a serious reassessment of the viability of retaining Nayland.

- Instead of the previous two bullet points, possibly a team of two or three priests covering three or all four parishes.

## **PARISH CLUSTERS - for immediate implementation**

Besides the basic Deanery Structure, most parishes will be grouped in 'clusters' of two, three or four, and will reach decisions together on times for weekend Masses, joint events and sharing resources. Especially in rural Deaneries, such clusters may be a better structure for organising consultative bodies for lay people, etc.

There are two main aims in such 'clustering'. Firstly, even those parishes which are likely to remain such in the foreseeable future will benefit both themselves and others by closely working together, sharing resources, etc. Secondly, in many cases the process of 'clustering' is but a first step towards eventual combination into a single parish: the more closely that parishes work together now, the less traumatic will be the eventual combination. Within 'clusters' of more than two parishes, it will soon emerge which combinations provide the most likely options for the future. For further thoughts on 'clusters', please see page 28f.

**Although any decisions need to be flexible and open to review and change, the following 'clusters' are to begin from September 2004, and are now seen as an essential part of diocesan life. One of the new roles of the Dean is to monitor the progress of such clusters within his deanery.**

### **BURY ST EDMUNDS DEANERY**

- Clare, Haverhill, Hadleigh & Sudbury (Stour Valley). Within this cluster, closer links should be developed between (1) Clare & Haverhill, (2) Hadleigh & Sudbury.
- Brandon, Diss & Thetford
- Bury St Edmund's, Newmarket & Stowmarket

### **CAMBRIDGE DEANERY**

- Cambridge city parishes & Sawston  
This developing clustering will involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing all the Mass centres served by OLEM.
- Buckden, Huntingdon, St Ives & St Neot's

## **COASTAL DEANERY**

- Beccles, Bungay, Poringland & Southwold  
This developing clustering will inevitably involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing weekly Mass at Gillingham and Loddon.
- Gorleston, Great Yarmouth & Lowestoft  
This developing clustering will inevitably involve a serious reassessment of the viability of retaining St Nicholas, Pakefield; Acle; Caister-on-Sea.

## **KING'S LYNN DEANERY**

- Dereham & Swaffham (with Watton)
- Downham Market, King's Lynn & Hunstanton (centred on King's Lynn)
- March, Whittlesey & Wisbech (cross-deanery cluster)  
Wisbech will stay in King's Lynn Deanery for the time being, but may eventually be moved to the Peterborough Deanery.

## **IPSWICH DEANERY**

- Aldeburgh & Woodbridge (although long distances - 17 miles may make this difficult)
- Ipswich town parishes and Felixstowe will generally work together more closely, and continue to explore together the most viable clusters. The number and times of Masses in Ipswich is being reviewed, alongside church capacity. This developing clustering will involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing weekly Mass at Capel St Mary and the Royal Hospital School.
- Already agreed is the clustering of St Mary Magdalen's & St Pancras. Sunday Masses are being rationalised.

## **NORTH NORFOLK DEANERY**

- Cromer, Sheringham & North Walsham
- Fakenham & Walsingham

## **NORWICH DEANERY**

- Cathedral, St George's & Costessey

## **PETERBOROUGH DEANERY**

- Peterborough city parishes
- March, Whittlesey & Wisbech (cross-deanery Rosminian cluster)  
Wisbech will stay in King's Lynn Deanery for the time being, but may eventually be moved to the Peterborough Deanery. Whittlesey may eventually be better clustered with the Peterborough city parishes. The Catholic communities at Chatteris (March parish) and Ramsey (Whittlesey parish) are part of this cluster, but this may eventually need to be reviewed.

## Appendices

### Towards One Mass

If the Mass is to remain at the very centre of our Catholic lives, as it must, we will have to be flexible about where and when we go to Mass.

Many factors need to be kept in mind as we reduce the number of places of worship and of Masses in each place, especially in our rural communities. Environmental concerns are important: it makes sense for one priest to travel to the people rather than for many people to travel long distances (rather than just a few miles). This would be better also for people with no transport of their own.

People will find it more difficult to get to Mass if the number of Masses is reduced: people without transport, families with small children, people with Sunday commitments - the less choice of Mass, the more difficult things become. And of course we understand how attached people become to a place of worship, especially if it is part of our Catholic heritage, or their families helped to build the church, or they have worshipped there since childhood.

But this is not necessarily a realistic solution. As the number of priests declines, and parishes are combined, those priests will be required to celebrate Mass in more than one main church. This will only be possible if less Masses are celebrated in each place, and smaller places of worship are closed.

We also need to keep in mind the need for neighbouring priests to 'supply' for each other: simply because a priest is allowed to celebrate a maximum of three Sunday Masses does not mean that he should be doing so unless there is real pastoral need.

Especially when they are close to another church or away from centres of population, we will have to rethink our use of churches whether they are ancient or very modern. If the English Reformation had not happened, we would probably now be making many of our great medieval churches redundant all over East Anglia.

Some communities with Sunday morning Masses will be asked to change to a Sunday evening or Saturday evening. Whatever people think of 'one Sunday mass' as an ideal, reducing the number of Masses and changing Mass times across the diocese will be essential precisely in order to ensure Mass for as many people as possible.

Neighbouring parishes are going to have to start working more closely together now, and gradually adjust their Mass times so that eventually one priest can serve both parishes. This will happen in quite a few of our parishes over the next few years. It is surely best to prepare for that now, and move in stages towards it, rather than wait until a parish suddenly realises they will no longer have a priest. Imagine, for example, two neighbouring parishes (perhaps 6 or 7 miles apart, or closer in an urban setting), each with a Saturday evening Mass and a 9.30 Mass on Sunday morning. It makes sense for one parish to have a Saturday evening Mass and the other a Sunday evening Mass, and to stagger the Sunday morning Masses so that one is at 9.00 and the other at 11.00. That would mean that each parish priest could cover or 'supply' for the other when ill.

There are places in the diocese which need two Masses because of the small size of the church, but where that just will not be possible in the future. We need to explore radical solutions if we want to keep our Mass.

- A few churches could be **enlarged** so that two congregations could fit into one Mass.
- In others, we may need to abandon our cherished small church and **move** Mass to somewhere larger (perhaps the Anglican or Methodist church nearby, or the main Catholic Church several miles away).
- Another possibility is to sell the current church site, and to build a **new church** on a more accessible and central site elsewhere, with more parking. Any new church built in our diocese must be large enough to accommodate the whole Mass attendance at a single Mass, with room for future growth.

Local parish communities need to explore such possibilities with creativity and adaptability. Our situation will increasingly demand that we reduce the number of Masses precisely in order to ensure we have as many Masses as we can with fewer priests to celebrate them.

## **Youth Masses**

### *Some guidelines from Bishop Michael*

As part of our diocesan programme to help our young people to experience a greater sense of welcome and belonging in our churches, and to become more fully involved in the life and worship of the Catholic Church, I have strongly encouraged deaneries and parishes to organise regular youth Masses. Several deaneries and parishes have already done so with much success.

But what is a `Youth Mass'? Firstly, a Sunday Youth Mass will not be for young people only, but a community Mass with particular focus on the young people and participation by them.

Secondly, many people seem to think a Youth Mass is simply Mass as usual, but with livelier music accompanied by guitars rather than organ.

Careful choice of music is a vital dimension of any liturgical planning, and this certainly applies to the celebration of Mass with young people. The same is true of how the music is played: young people do not respond well to hymns played more slowly than they are meant to be!

But a `Youth Mass' is far more than a Mass with young people present and a few guitars replacing the organ.

A Youth Mass aims at full, active, conscious participation by the young people present. First and foremost, that means spiritual participation, prayerfulness, openness to the presence of God. Such a Mass provides an opportunity for young people to express their worship to God and communicate with him in a way with which they feel comfortable.

The creation of the right atmosphere is important there. The Taize community is one of many experiences from which we can learn. Taize has developed a form of liturgy much loved by many thousands of young people from across the world. This involves a simple setting, careful use of subdued lighting and colour, candlelight, meditative songs, short Scripture readings and long periods of silence. The prayer at Taize often seems to touch the heart (rather than merely the emotions) of young people. (For more on learning from Taize, click my article 'The air you breathe at Taize' on the Taize [website](#) under 'About Taize' on the right hand of the web-page).

The priest's homily is also a key factor. It needs to be carefully directed to teenagers and their concerns. It could well be developed by the priest in dialogue with a group of young people beforehand.

The most important people to ask about good 'Youth Masses' are not well-meaning adults but the young people themselves. The monthly Youth Mass in my last parish was developed at the request of the Parish Youth Council (it was their unanimous Number One priority at their first meeting) and in ongoing discussion with them as to what they wanted. Any parish planning to have a Youth Mass should arrange a meeting of teenagers and ask them what they want. Small groups feeding back into a general discussion works best, in my experience.

Inevitably some of them will come up with 'wild and wacky' ideas which are liturgically unacceptable. Any Youth Mass must operate within the official liturgical norms of the Catholic Church (for example, a lay person - young or old - may not read the Gospel at Mass). But often the young people themselves are the first to weed out unacceptable ideas. They are not after the 'wild and wacky', but a liturgy in which they are fully involved and feel they belong, and which touches and nourishes their spiritual depths with the presence of God.

Despite the common perception, young people have a great sense of spirituality, and respond well when offered the opportunity for prayer and reflection. Taize shows us that young people can spend five minutes in silent prayer without much guidance or direction. Every Youth Mass should include at least some time of quiet reflection, inviting God deeper into their lives. The priest can easily create the right atmosphere for this after Communion, perhaps after a meditative and 'quietening' song.

### **How can young people be as fully involved as possible in such a Mass?**

- Welcoming people at the church door and distributing Mass sheets or hymnbooks
- Reading the Scriptures, sometimes in parts (e.g. Narrator, Moses, the People, etc)
- Writing and reading the Intercessions
- Taking the Collection
- The Presentation of the Gifts
- Acting as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion once commissioned (15+ after being confirmed)
- Forms of drama and mime during one or other Scripture reading (remembering that the Gospel must be read by a deacon or priest)

- Preparing the homily with the priest, with possible drama involvement in the homily
- A brief testimony or talk by young people after the notices and before the blessing
- Preparing artwork for the Mass to decorate the church, illustrate the Scripture readings, express prayer and for use at the Presentation of the Gifts
- Preparing and serving coffee, etc, after Mass

All of this is in addition to the choice of music and music ministry in general. As far as possible, young people should be involved in the choice of music for the Mass, while avoiding the same songs each time.

Forming a good 'Youth Band', at first with sensitive adult support, will enable a good repertoire of liturgical music to be developed. There is an increasing amount of youth-friendly and lively music suitable for Mass, rather than some of the old 'Folk Songs' which have long passed their prime and some modern songs whose theology is sometimes difficult to reconcile with Catholic teaching. Care needs to be taken with the words of songs as well as the tunes. No celebration of Mass is meant to be a concert: liturgical music of any style should aim above all to enhance and enrich the Mass as a time of worship, a time of prayer in community.

There can sometimes be resistance from church musicians to the development of Youth Masses with a very different style of music. Music ministry needs to be as varied as the musical needs of a community, and there must be room for developing and enlarging the team of people responsible for music in the liturgy. But established church musicians can contribute greatly by supporting this development, whatever their personal musical preferences, and giving others the freedom to move in new directions.

Both the Diocesan Director of Music and the Director of our Diocesan Youth Service can give details of music resources. The latter is also happy to work with parishes and deaneries in the organisation of Youth Masses.

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### **a future not our own**

**We accomplish in our lifetime  
only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise  
that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete,  
which is another way of saying  
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.**

**No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No programme  
accomplishes the Church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives  
includes everything.**

**That is what we are about.  
We plant a seed that will one day grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations  
that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects  
far beyond our capabilities.**

**We cannot do everything,  
and there is a sense of liberation  
in realising that.  
This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well.**

**It may be incomplete,  
but it is a beginning,  
a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace  
to enter and do the rest.**

**We may never see the end results,  
but that is the difference  
between the master builder and the worker.  
We are workers, not master builders,  
ministers, not messiahs.**

**We are prophets of a future not our own.**

***Archbishop Oscar Romero***