

*We entrust our conversations to the guidance of the Holy Spirit,
that we may be open to a new path for a new time.*



diocese of cloyne



Father, pour out your Spirit
upon your people,
and grant us
a new vision of your glory,
a new experience of your power,
a new faithfulness to your Word, and
a new consecration to your service,
that your love may grow among us,
and your kingdom come
through Christ our Lord. Amen



*"Would you be willing to travel to another church within or outside your own
parish in the event that Holy Mass is not being celebrated in your place?
If your answer is in the negative, we'll all be the poorer in the long term."*

*"Behold, I'm doing a new thing"
says the Lord (Isaiah 43)*

My dear people,

To live is to change, is a pearl of wisdom from St. John Henry Newman, a convert to the Catholic faith in the 19th Century. To live in the 21st Century is an experience of constant change, social, cultural and technological. Viewing "Reeling in the Years," the television series depicting life in former times is a dramatic reminder of the extent of the change we have experienced.

The Church whose life and presence within our communities and parish has had to adjust to and manage the change taking place in society. One particular pattern has been evident for some years now is the decline both in profession of Christian faith and its practice through the attendance at Holy Mass, which, for the believer, is an obligation in faith. The consequence of this generational shift from family and parish community attendance has seen a similar decline in responding to the call to Priesthood and Religious life. Despite this pattern in the Diocese of Cloyne, in all the parishes there are faithful practicing prayer congregations who witness to and support one another in faith.



*"To live is to change"
St. John Henry Newman,*

As Bishop, I, and those whose advice I seek and value, have been making gradual adjustments to respond to these changing circumstances. However, it is now clear from the numbers of clergy due for retirement from full time ministry on reaching 75 years, that significant, indeed major adjustment will be required. To assist me in planning for these changes I established a Diocesan Review Group (DRG). The group comprises of clergy and lay people, women and men.

This group was entrusted with reviewing the entire Diocese by way of resources, strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. I commend them for the thoroughness of their research and reflection. The results of their study and analysis has been shared with the priests of the Diocese at a Clergy Day in May last. The wish of all is to extend this conversation across the parishes.

To that end, meetings at Deanery level have been planned for this Autumn. Each parish is invited to be represented at the meeting of their Deanery. These meetings will be hosted by the Vicar General or Vicar Forane of the respective Deanery. Representatives of the DRG (Diocesan Review Group) will be the presenters and facilitators of these meetings. Their presentations will focus on the research done on each Deanery, with a view to informing the discussion and discernment required in your parish and deanery. Each parish will be invited to widen this conversation about our future in their own respective Parish Pastoral Council.

“Behold, I’m doing a new thing” says the Lord.

In the long history of the Diocese of Cloyne, indeed of the Church, it has faced many moments of crisis, even darkness. Many of these crises came from within the community of disciples by way of sinfulness and indifference. These moments call for a new vigour, a reanimation and reconfiguration. It is in this spirit of positivity and hope that we undertake this task.

The Synod which was undertaken under the guiding hand of the late ***Pope Francis, speaks powerfully to all the baptised of our call to co-responsibility*** for the nurturing of the faith amongst believers but also of the generosity of spirit to reach out constantly to share the grace and blessing of the Gospel. There is an urgent need to engage young people who are in search of a spiritual home. That invitation should be a priority in our outreach.

What you might ask will be the outcome of these conversations? I cannot say – but express my hope and prayer.

‘While no parish will be suppressed or amalgamated, we will need to commit to cooperating with neighbouring parishes to ensure the pastoral care of all. There is no intention to close churches, but it will be difficult to ensure the celebration of Holy Mass in every church in the Diocese every Sunday.’

In some respects, this may be the most challenging impact of these changes. Would you be willing to travel to another church within or outside your own parish in the event that Holy Mass is not being celebrated in your place? If your answer is in the negative, we’ll all be the poorer in the long term.

‘My hope is that across the Diocese, you the priests and people in the parishes will identify groups of parishes, which, together, will form a Pastoral Area, to which each will commit to collaboration in a spirit of charity.’

We will not achieve this by our own efforts. We entrust our conversations to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we may be open to a new path for a new time. So, I ask each community at prayer to remember this pastoral initiative whenever you gather. We yearn for a new heart, a new vitality of faith and life.

+ Wm. Crean

Most Rev. William Crean, D.D.,
Bishop of Cloyne.