



Archdiocese of Tuam

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A Pastoral Letter from Archbishop Francis Duffy

Imagining a new way of being Church in Ireland

What does God want from the Church in Ireland at this time? That is the key question being asked of us in this diocese and in this country as we continue along the synodal pathway.

Two years ago many of our parishes, and several other communities of faith, engaged in the synodal process of listening. The fruits of that process contributed to the Irish report to the International Synod held last October (2023) in Rome. A second, follow-up meeting of the Synod, will be held this October (2024) in Rome. Arising from the listening, discernment and discussion to date, one key question has emerged. I invite you to reflect on, pray about and discuss this question and let me know what you think.

The question is:

“How can we imagine the life of the Church in Ireland where people are co-responsible for the Church’s mission in different ways”?

It is valuable to break this down a little.

First, a little bit of context is important.

I believe this is an exciting time to be a Catholic in Ireland, a changing Ireland.

There is now a far greater welcome for people who once were on the margins of church and society. We also have many, many people who have come from other countries and cultures to live here and so enrich our lives.

There continues to be a great willingness among our people to generously support organisations such as Trócaire in its efforts to assist developing countries and to help in areas of sudden disasters. We are well able to look beyond our shores to help and encourage others in need.

The circumstances in which we live our faith are rapidly changing at local level. On one hand, drawing from those who are committed to and practicing the faith, there are many involved adoration groups, prayer groups, apostolic societies and youth organisations, all contributing positively to the life of the Church and all motivated by love of the Lord. On the other hand, there are fewer and fewer priests, vocations to the religious congregations are also down, and the number of people who attend Sunday Mass is in serious decline, especially among the younger generations.

Yet, in our parishes there is an eagerness among people to take on more responsibility for pastoral initiatives. Some are willing to be more directly involved in pastoral leadership and are keen to receive support and training.

Although times are changing, let us not forget what is constant, what we are about as a Church, as a diocesan community of faith. As believers, we are called to proclaim Christ crucified and risen. He was crucified out of love for us, he was raised from the dead out of love for us - God's unfathomable and unending love for us. Our faith in the person and mission of Jesus Christ must remain central to all our deliberations, planning and structures, because without Jesus and without his Gospel – this radical and good news, then we are just looking at change for the sake of change.

So, put simply, *“how can we, the Christian Faithful – laity, religious and clergy be co-responsible – i.e. plan, work and cooperate together, supporting each other in our equal but different God-given vocations, in order to spread and keep that good news about Jesus to the forefront of life?”*

How can you do that, or continue to do that in your parishes, in these changing times? Our mission it to spread and put into practice the Good News of Jesus Christ. How can we do it better and how can we do it with an eye on conveying the key message about Christ to as many as possible?

Think about it. How is that being carried out in your parish right now? How could it be better? Does it need to be different, given the pace of change all around us? What are your suggestions?

Have a meeting at parish pastoral council level. Have a meeting at deanery pastoral council level. Meetings of people already involved as readers, ministers of Holy Communion, finance committees, youth groups. Parishioners, priests and religious, any group that is interested is welcome to meet and discuss and think deeply about the key question.

Please email your responses to me, before 15th March, at admin@tuamarchdiocese.org where our synodal committee will collate our diocesan report. This will form part of our national input to the Synod 2024 of next October.

Thank you.

With every good wish and blessing,



+ Francis Duffy
Archbishop of Tuam

21st February 2024