

# THE YEAR OF FAITH

2012-2013



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Jesus Christ,

Fifty years ago the Second Vatican Council, convoked by Blessed Pope John XXIII, started a renewal of faith and Christian living that is still ongoing. Pope John XXIII, a man of God, wished to renew the Church as the sacrament of Christ and the People of God. He took the unexpected step of convoking a Council.



The Council calls us to renew our love for Christ who lives in the Church. At the same time it urges us to open our hearts with confidence to the world around us. In our diocese we have recently captured this ideal to which we are called in the phrase, 'Living Church'. The Year of Faith, proclaimed by Pope

Benedict XVI, gives impetus to our diocesan project, The Living Church.

This Year of Faith offers an opportunity to parishioners, young and old, religious, priests and bishops to try imaginative initiatives in catechesis and pastoral care. It is an opportunity and a time to deepen our faith so that we are equipped to respond to the struggles of contemporary life which we all face.

At the beginning of this Year of Faith I wish to share with you my own hopes for our diocese as we strive to become more and more a Living Church.

### ***Faith Understood***

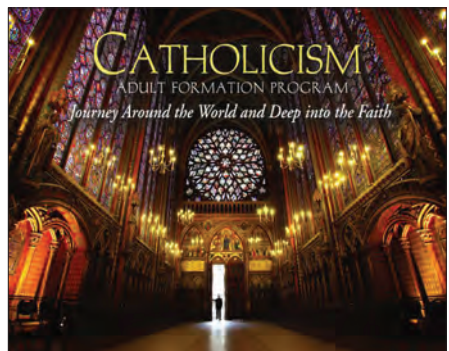
One evening in July this year, during the Diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes, I was chatting with a group of ladies who voluntarily help the sick and invalid pilgrims each year. One of them told me that the reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah for that day had struck her. But then she went on to say, "the terrible thing is that I know very little about Isaiah!" Everybody at the table nodded in agreement. They wanted to know the Scriptures more.

This is a sentiment that was shared not only by those who sat at that table in Lourdes; it was echoed right across the diocese in the Listening events led by the fifty facilitators – men and women want to know more about the Christian faith and its sources.

Our faith journey is life-long. Yet for many the opportunities to participate in catechesis stop when we leave the education system in our teens. We don't get an opportunity to mature our understanding and our appreciation of the Christian faith. We develop all kinds of skills in order to take up employment and provide services through our work. Yet we don't have the same opportunity to develop as people of faith; to fully appreciate the beauty of Christian faith in Jesus of Nazareth. We learn little of the Social Teaching of the Christian tradition and we know little of its value as a source to comment and reflect on issues of justice, the organisation of work, the economy, the protection of the family, respect for life, care for the environment and inter-generational solidarity. This shouldn't be the case.

During the coming year I recommend everyone to avail of the opportunities to deepen our shared understanding of the faith.

In order that we may explore the gift of our faith, I have asked that every parish in our diocese run a programme from Lent to Pentecost this year. My proposal is that over a period of 10 weeks groups will gather all across the diocese to reflect together on what we believe as Catholics and to consider together the richness of living and celebrating the Christian faith as the community of believers which makes the Church present in our time and in our society.



I have tasked the Living Church office to provide each of us throughout the year with meaningful opportunities to learn and celebrate our faith.

My invitation and challenge to you is to seize this opportunity to join in these events so that with our deeper knowledge and renewed confidence we can profess our personal and parish community commitment to Christ.

### ***United in Worship***

In the Listening Events in our parishes people spoke of their desire for a more 'dynamic and renewed sense of the faith expressed in beautiful liturgy'. 50 years ago the council said that 'Zeal for the promotion and restoration of the sacred liturgy'<sup>1</sup> was one of the key signs that God was moving in the Church in our time. As a diocese we are committed to building with God's help and showing forth concrete evidence of a Living Church in our midst. A wholehearted celebration of the sacred liturgies that will take place during the Year of Faith is an ideal way to help make this a reality and to inspire us to live the Christian faith in practice.

The Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life"<sup>2</sup>. It is the doorway and means to fullest participation in the Divine life of

Christ. More than anything else we must want to fulfil God's will and we are reliant on his Word and his presence in the Eucharist to enable us to do this. The Eucharist is a time when we can unite all that is going on in our lives – family, community, work, relationships, sufferings and joys with Christ's sacrifice. This time transforms us and enables us to be in communion with Christ.



And when we are transformed by Christ it is then that we are empowered to live a truly Christian life. Such a life is attractive, compelling and - in its witness - the greatest tool of evangelisation in our society. If we really grasp the enormity of what is involved in the Eucharist it will change the way we take part in Sunday Mass. We will no longer attend out of duty but out of love and a desire to satisfy our deep hunger for God.

## ***A Community of Witnesses***

Pope Paul VI said, in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, that in our days it is not teachers that are required to spread the faith to others but witnesses.<sup>3</sup> Our faith will be convincing only if it is backed up by lives of joy-filled service.

During the Year of Faith the whole Church is invited to a renewed commitment to love and to the service of others. Pope Benedict XVI encourages us “to intensify the witness of charity”<sup>4</sup> and to recognise the need to be of service to Christ present in the lonely, the marginalised or the excluded. The unique witness of service to Christ in those we meet around us will encourage many people to knock on the “door of faith”.



One of the principal calls of the Second Vatican Council was for Catholics to rebuild relationship with brothers and sisters in other churches. On the one hand much progress has been made in terms of the healing of old wounds. However, it has to be admitted that many Catholics still feel unprepared for the task of entering into meaningful conversation with people of other Christian confessions and denominations. In our increasingly secular world which tells us that our Christian vision is foolishly naive we will need to work along with Christians of other churches in presenting faith in an intelligent, responsible and creative way. If we are to do this well as Catholics, we must come to know better our Catholic tradition and deepen our understanding of our greatest treasure, our faith in Jesus Christ.

### ***Down and Connor 2013***

The year ahead is also a preparation for the Diocesan Congress. It will involve a challenge to grow in a genuine spirit of co-responsibility between clergy, laity and religious. I invite everybody to become involved during the year, striving to grow together both in understanding and in living the faith, praying earnestly that the Lord who has called us to be a Living Church will reveal to us the ways in which we can make it become a reality.



Twenty years ago the late Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich at the Synod of Bishops in Rome said that ‘the laity in the Church are like a sleeping giant waiting to be awakened.’ The wake up will come when all of us, clergy and laity together, work to deepen our grasp of the faith and become able to ‘give a reason for

the hope that is in us.’<sup>15</sup> Christian hope, sourced in the crucified and risen person of Jesus Christ, is deeply attractive. It is empowering. Being a people of hope in our diocese, and allowing that hope to influence our daily lives, will open the eyes of many to the fact that faith in Jesus Christ is indeed a great treasure.

May the Year of Faith, which begins on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of Second Vatican Council and the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and which will end on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2013, bring us all abundant grace and an understanding of what has been revealed in Christ Jesus.

Yours in Christ,

+ Noel Treanor  
11th October, 2012

## Year of Faith Events



### **OPENING THE YEAR OF FAITH**

**St Peter's Cathedral**

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> October, 5pm**

To celebrate the opening of the Year of Faith as a Diocesan Community, Bishop Treanor invites you to join him for Vespers to celebrate the dedication of our Cathedral. This is an opportunity to pray for the success of The Year of Faith and our Diocesan Pastoral Planning as we move towards the Congress.



### **'THE MYSTICS'**

**St Colmcille's Parish Centre,**

**Ballyhackamore, 7:30-9:30pm**

Join Brendan Comerford SJ at the beginning of the Year of Faith for a series of evenings to learn about the great mystics of our Church and how their experiences and writings can impact on our lives today.

Wed 17 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Julian of Norwich
Wed 24 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Meister Eckhart
Wed 31 <sup>st</sup> Oct	Thérèse of Lisieux
Wed 7 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Edith Stein
Wed 14 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Thomas Merton
Wed 28 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Karl Rahner



### **'KIRKINRIOLA LECTURE SERIES'**

Join the Parishioners of Ballymena in All Saints' Church as they host a series of monthly talks on the fundamental doctrines of our faith. 'Prayer', Dom Mark-Ephrem Nolan OSB Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October, 7.30pm. 'Baptism', Fr Aidan McCaughan, Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> November. 'Jesus Christ', Fr Niall Coll, Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December.



### **'COME AND SEE' DAY**

**Diocesan Seminary, St Malachy's**

**College, Antrim Rd Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>**

**October 10am – 4:30pm**

The Diocese extends a warm welcome to those considering a vocation to the priesthood. Through informal conversation and discussion along with the celebration of Mass you will have an opportunity to see the seminary at first hand.



### **DCF Weekend (Down and Connor Folk-group)**

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>**

**October, Dromantine.**

“Amazing Grace” is the theme of this year’s weekend where people engaged in music ministry across the Diocese will come together to learn new music, develop skills and give praise to God.



### **"SOUL SEARCHING"**

**Catholic Chaplaincy at Queen’s**

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>**

**November 7pm**

A 3 week course on the concept of the Soul by Dr Gaven Kerr, QUB lecturer.



### **WOMEN OF FAITH**

During the Year of Faith we will provide opportunities for women to come together to pray, listen to an inspirational talk and to reflect together on the role of faith in women’s lives in today’s world.  
Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November, St Mary’s Hall, Newcastle, 11am – 1pm  
Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February- Bangor  
Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May – Coleraine



### **WHY THE YEAR OF FAITH?**

**St. Brigid's Parish Centre  
Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast.  
31<sup>st</sup> January 2013**

Speaker: The Most Reverend Charles Brown, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland.



### **YEAR OF FAITH LECTURES**

Following on from the lecture by the Apostolic Nuncio the diocese will run a series of lectures that will examine the role of faith and its relevance to our lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Watch out for more details in your Parish bulletin.





## **THE ANNUAL VOCATIONS WEEKEND**

**8<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup> February, Drumalis**

This retreat has been going for almost 40 years and many of the priests of our diocese found these couple of days very helpful for discerning their vocation.



## **CATECHESIS: LENT to PENTECOST**

Over ten sessions between Lent and Pentecost many parishes will provide an opportunity for people to gather and reflect on the major themes in the understanding of the Church. Parishes will use *CATHOLICISM* or another suitable resource.



## **REDISCOVERING MERCY**

Trócaire's 'Rediscovering Mercy' is a four week interactive faith-based Lenten programme for adults. It invites participants into a reflective space to rediscover God's loving mercy for them and for the world. It is an opportunity to see how we are

all loved by God, and out of this love, to see how we are called to love others in our families, communities and around the world.



## **PENTECOST NOVENA**

**10<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

As we approach Pentecost the Bishop will invite the whole diocese to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the development of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan and the work of revealing the Living Church among us.



## **DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES**

The annual pilgrimage to Lourdes is a key moment in the life of the diocese. It is an opportunity for many, young and old, to serve and pray together in the very special atmosphere of Our Lady's shrine.

Seven day pilgrimage 10<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> July

Five day pilgrimage 11<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> July

Youth pilgrimage 08<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> July



## **DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOUGH DERG**

**Fri 9<sup>th</sup> – Sun 11<sup>th</sup> August 2013**

Journey with the Living Church team for a 3 day pilgrimage that allows us to step aside from our modern life and routine. This small Donegal Island, which was one of St Patrick's first sanctuaries, offers the opportunity for us to connect again with the treasures of our faith, to rediscover the quietness within and to go away renewed.



## **DIOCESAN CONGRESS**

**27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

Since the Living Church report was launched in November 2011 the Diocese has engaged in pastoral planning so that each of us in the Diocese of Down and Connor can participate in our Church community to deepen our faith and to share that faith with others. The Diocesan Congress will be an exciting moment where we take the pastoral plan and discuss how we can make it bear fruit.



## **CLOSING THE YEAR OF FAITH**

**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

As Pope Benedict closes the Year of Faith in Rome we will gather in thanksgiving for the riches that the Year of Faith has given us. In each of our Parishes we will celebrate the feast of Christ the King and we will gather once again as a Diocesan community for Vespers in the Cathedral.

## Training and Formation

In response to the Living Church Report the diocese is making training available in three key areas:



### Parish Pastoral Councils

In Parish Pastoral Councils priests and people gather to pray and reflect co-responsibly on the question, ***‘what does God want for our parish in our time?’*** Our training and facilitation package is aimed at parishes where there is no council as yet, or where the existing council is looking for an opportunity to re-focus or re-energise. The training will help a parish to plan how we can be Church together in a changing world, learning from the riches of our Catholic tradition.



### Ministry of Welcome



Pope John XXIII imagined the parish as a ‘village fountain’ at which all could quench their thirst. Our Ministry of Welcome training package delivered across four

interactive sessions helps a parish community to make an assessment of their current level of welcome in the parish. This will involve looking inwards, at the already established faith community, and outwards at

those who do not, for whatever reason, worship in their parish. Furthermore, the training challenges us to look at the parish as a people with a mission, reaching out to those on the margins or currently outside of our Church communities.



### Proclamation of the Word Training

In the Liturgy of the Word God truly speaks to his people, opening up to them the mystery of redemption and salvation, and nourishing their spirit. In Proclamation of the Word training we aim to help the reader, through whom God speaks, to have a deeper understanding of God’s revelation through the Word. The course also helps them to use their natural talents to best effect in proclaiming God’s Word with clarity, meaning and conviction.



#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>*Sacrosanctum Concilium 43*

<sup>2</sup>*Lumen Gentium 11*

<sup>3</sup>*Evangelii Nuntiandi 41*

<sup>4</sup>*Porta Fidei 14*

<sup>5</sup> *1 Peter 3:15*

#### Acknowledgements

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# Living Church

DOWN & CONNOR 2013

