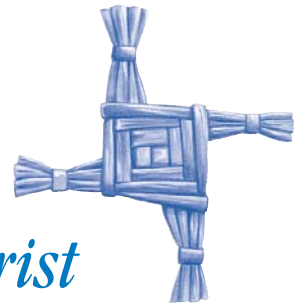


June 2004

*Together
in Christ*



REACHING OUT

My dear friends,

Last January, a series of open meetings took place around the diocese to discuss '**Together in Christ**', our draft Diocesan Guide. In the foreword to that publication, I explained that the draft Guide was being circulated in order to invite people to identify what should be our key priorities for the coming years.

I undertook to facilitate the implementation of these priorities by providing appropriate resources and training at diocesan and parish level.

On the reverse side of this sheet, you will find a report on the priorities that received the most support at the parish meetings. Overall, there is a strong consensus that '**reaching out**' to our youth, to newcomers in our parishes and to those currently uncommitted to parish life should be our primary objective. The other significant issues named were faith formation and liturgy.

I fully endorse this report and the priorities that have been identified. Already, planning for a diocesan-wide campaign on the theme of 'reaching out' is taking place. This campaign will be launched after the summer.

I would like to thank all those who have participated in any way in the consultation process, in particular I thank the people who organised the meetings and forwarded the written reports. It is my hope that this dialogue will continue and will become a standard practice for our diocese as we plan for the future together.

As we set out to fulfill these tasks, let us be aware that the Lord is our constant companion and guide. In 'reaching out', we are following his teaching - "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Gospel to all creation" (Mk 16:15)

I encourage everyone to see this report as a shared responsibility. I look forward to working with you.

BISHOP OF KILDARE AND LEIGHLIN



*'Look, I have set before you
an open door'*

(Revelation 3:8)

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FROM PARISH MEETINGS

This report provides a summary of the main points of consensus that emerged from the parish meetings. In total, over 1200 people attended those meetings. The quotes from specific parish reports reflect a view widely shared by other parishes. All submissions from individuals have also been taken into account. Overall, responses focused on the need for action, it was felt that the draft Guide does not need fundamental up-dating in the short-term.

REACHING OUT

The recurring themes in the Guide of welcome, hospitality and belonging received a lot of support and the idea of Parish as home, family, place of welcome etc. struck a chord with people. Reaching out to our youth, newcomers to the community, the uncommitted were seen as the top priorities. Communication is a vital area and we need top quality resources to make an impact.

"to create a greater sense of welcoming and belonging" (Edenderry)
"form a 'welcoming group' to welcome newcomers to the parish" (Tullow)
"need to communicate with 70% people in parishes not listening" (Newbridge)

Every report highlighted the need to reach our young people.

"renewal should be especially concentrated on young people" (Carbury)
"we must find a way to let them know they are wanted and needed" (Arles)

FAITH FORMATION

Many comments pointed towards the need for personal faith development, especially in the context of discussing faith with others. Training and support was needed for those who take on particular responsibilities or ministries in their parish, such as parish council members or church readers.

"we need the skills to evangelise at local level" (Curragh)
"need some education in scripture - not too academic please" (Bagenalstown)
"many young parents are ill-equipped to teach religion to their children" (Leighlin)

LITURGY

A number of comments centred on the importance of the Sunday Liturgy, along with the promotion of Family Masses and Youth Masses. Liturgy generally needs to become more interesting and relevant to people's lives.

"necessary to make liturgy more interesting for the youth" (Ballyadams)
"we need to bring the Mass alive so that all age groups will be touched" (Rathvilly)

DIOCESAN GUIDE & CONSULTATION

Overall, there was a warm welcome for the Guide and the associated consultation process. It was good that people had the opening to give their opinion and to be involved in setting the agenda for the diocese.

"opportunity for people to communicate" (Baltinglass)
"people felt the book invited their opinions" (Kilcock)
"it is advice for the Bishop from the grassroots" (Rathangan)

COPIES OF 'TOGETHER IN CHRIST' AVAILABLE FROM YOUR PARISH