

COUNCIL FOR PASTORAL RENEWAL AND ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

WORKSHOP SATURDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2010

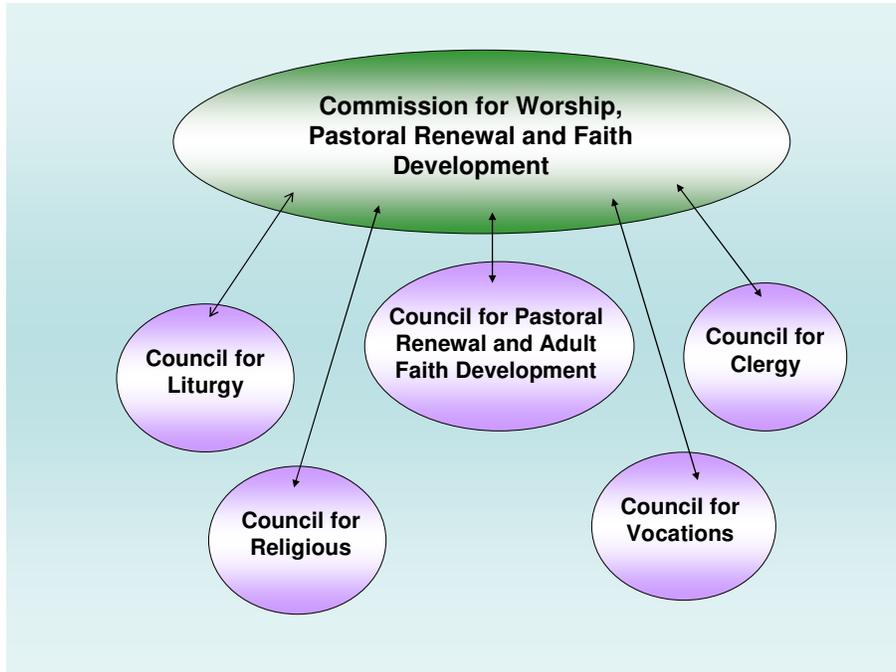
The Workshop was opened by Bishop Bill Murphy (Kerry Diocese). He welcomed everyone especially Professor Robert Schreiter from the Catholic Theological Union Chicago.

Following the opening prayer the workshop was introduced by John Colgan who facilitated the day. John outlined the purpose of the workshop and its intention, which was allowing the participants to consider the challenges facing us in our Church today and the opportunity this provided for lay people, at Diocesan and Parish level, to become involved and to make a difference. John spoke about changing the 'worst of times into the best of times.' The day provided time for shared reflection, dialogue, and up to date information on current activities within the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development.

The first session was presented by Sr. Anne Codd, resource person to the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development (PRAFD) and Ms Julieann Moran, research assistant to the Council. Sr. Anne outlined the structure of the Irish Catholic Bishop's Conference. The Conference has five Commissions, one of which is the Commission for Worship, Pastoral Renewal and Faith Development.



This Commission in turn has five Councils, one being the Council for Pastoral Renewal and Adult Faith Development, which is in the process of being formed (Autumn 2010).



This is the Council that is relevant to those working in faith development areas. Representatives from the dioceses are members of this Council.



Communication within the Council is mainly through regional and national meetings, conferences and workshops. The Council has a number of projects underway. These include, among others, establishing a task group on evangelisation, hosting a national conversation on the grouping of parishes into larger pastoral areas, revising the Parish Pastoral Councils Framework Document, the implementation of the Framework Document on youth ministry and processing the responses to the Pope's Letter.

Julieann spoke briefly on this last project. She is collating replies and preparing a composite response to the Pope's letter to the people of Ireland. She urged everyone still wishing to respond, either on a personal level or part of a group, to send in their comments as soon as possible. A number of delegates said that they had responded to their respective dioceses but had not received any response or even acknowledgment. Julieann invited them to copy their comments to her for inclusion in the composite response.

Robert Schreiter's Discourses

The first talk was on the theme of 'Church as Church of the baptised'. Professor Schreiter commented that it was a special time for the Church. There are moments of grace and it is time to take hold of what we know, so as to grow as disciples of Christ, what we are intended to be. In Ireland's past we had the most priests per capita in the world. However, we have seen much social change and, in present circumstances, we face both an enormous challenge and an incredible opportunity. Asking what is Church or who is Church, Bob gave an account of the Church over the centuries whereby the clergy were seen as the Church while others participated by praying, paying and obeying. Renewal, as crystallised in Vatican II, helps to restore the Church to its foundational identity as the Church of the baptised.

Bob stressed the importance of baptism as a primary sacrament. Through baptism we are incorporated into the body of Christ and become part of his universal priesthood. Baptism gives us, clergy and laity, rights and responsibilities. As the baptised, do we see our responsibilities as something that the clergy have 'deigned' to allow or just something to remedy the crisis? We need to know and understand what it means to be part of the Church through baptism and how we should respond to the call of our baptism.

To be effective in our mission we need to have structures to work within. Parish Pastoral Councils were a good example but they need to be strong and ready to take the initiative where this is called for. Bob indicated that in the USA 37% of parishes do not have a resident pastor. If Ireland is moving in this direction we are all, clergy and laity, presented with a great challenge but also a great opportunity to work together in ministry.

Asking how can we make all this real or concrete, Bob considered some of the obstacles. Are we in a situation where clergy want to support participation but lay people are selective in what they want to do? Or is it laity wanting to collaborate but the clergy back off? This is something that has to be considered. Bob affirmed that formation, education, and catechesis are most definitely needed in order for us to know that it means to be the body of Christ now. Looking to the scriptures, Bob referred to Paul's letters to the Corinthians. We each have and bring gifts. All need

to know what it is we can do and find supporting networks. It is important to have structures to support, sustain and remind us who we are and who we can be. We need **networks** of support, we need to be aware of the **process**: being responsible for others, working with people, and a sense of human reality. With structures in place, everybody can see what needs to be pressed forward. Bob suggested a particular resource in the USA www.emergingmodels.org and reaffirmed the need for formation (knowing the possibilities), structure (deepening through contacts), and the processes (recognition of the fundamental importance of relationality). He reminded us once again, that baptism is not about the individual. It is an initiation into a community deeply bound by grace.

Bob's second talk, introduced as 'Church: sacramental and missionary', continued the theme of the Church of the baptised and the importance of the role of lay people within the Church. He urged everyone to read the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*, which he described as a remarkable document in its outline of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Our role as lay faithful allows us to share, through our baptism, in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Christ. Asking what our idea of sacramental was or what does it mean to be sacramental, Bob suggested it was something we could see, hear, touch right now but that it was also about unseen beliefs and values, something transcendent, and something that had additional deeper meaning. *Lumen Gentium* speaks about the Church as sacrament to the world and indicates to the world what God has intended for the world. Chapter Two of the document, entitled the People of God, all people created by God. Considering the baptised, Bob said it was our universal call to holiness, to mission to the world the love of God. We do this through our call to be priests, prophets, and kings.

Referring also to the last document of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Bob suggested that this document was profoundly connected to the world. There had never been a pastoral constitution before in Church history and no other Church document ever communicated how to be Church in the world. Bob spoke about 'mission' and its continued misinterpretation as solely 'going out.' At the heart of mission is what God does: sending Christ to bring humanity to life, guided through the Spirit. The Church is at the service of God's mission for the world. When the world is reconciled with God there will be no need for Church. We need to discover our place within this mission. There is sacramental value in even the smallest of practical actions and we, as Irenaeus suggested, we are fully alive when we manifest God's glory through our prayer and our actions. Being baptised carries all this. We need to ask ourselves where do we see our place in the mission of the Church and in what ways can we make our gifts more recognised, appreciated, and engaged in God's work.

In a short reflection after lunch we considered both of these questions. The feedback from this session highlighted some concerns and frustrations at parish, and sometimes diocesan, level. Some people spoke of a lack of proper dialogue and discussion between priests and laity. This emphasised the need for structures and again the Pastoral Council was seen as a way of dealing with these issues. We should be prepared to take the initiative, stop waiting for permission to do things and open up dialogues about a shared future.

Youth Presentation

The Youth Framework Document, published by the National Committee of Diocesan Youth Directors, was presented by Anita Ryan (Dromore Diocese) and Padraig Swan (Director of Magis Ireland www.magisireland.com). Padraig explained the structure and content of the document and Anita gave an insight into her Youth Ministry work in the Dromore Diocese. This session was very well received.

Resources for Communication

The final session was presented by Church Resources, Getonline and Cinews. These groups provides a number of services to help parishes and other bodies to make the most of technology for mission. They can be further researched at www.churchresources.ie; www.getonline.ie; and www.cinews.ie.

This session, also, was much appreciated.

In drawing proceedings to a close, Bishop Murphy identified pre-baptismal catechesis as a priority in the work of pastoral renewal. He thanked all who had contributed to a very helpful event.