

DIOCESE OF GALLOWAY

+ EMBRACING CHANGE + DISCUSSION PAPER

on the topic of
pastoral planning and service for the future



John 13:1-15 is suggested as a text source for parish groups to begin their reflection on this discussion paper. The time of reflection could begin along the lines of Lectio Divina for example.

Diocese of Galloway, 8 Corsehill Road, Ayr, KA7 2ST. Tel: (01292) 266750

Email: administration@gallowaydiocese.org.uk

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INTRODUCTION

The principles this consultation paper are based on are the very same principles from the initial “Embracing the Future” discussion paper of the year 2000. These guidelines build on those principles and presumes them to be known and regarded. The “Embracing the Future” (2000) paper discussed throughout the diocese identified the principles underpinning the pastoral planning across the diocesan community at that time. These principles are available to read again online on the diocesan website. Log onto: www.gallowaydiocese.org.uk

The pastoral reality envisaged by that document has long overtaken us and that is why we are moving the discussion forward with this consultation paper entitled “Embracing Change”.

It arises out of the reality that the Church is changing, and that what was suitable in the past is now no longer sustainable. There must be changes: changes in mindset, in expectations and in structures. Such changes however are not issues to be faced at some time in the future, but must be planned for and developed now.

OUR CHANGING SITUATION

Presently there are 23 diocesan priests serving in the diocese (with three others from Religious Orders).

One priest is already working over the present retirement age—which is 75 years of age.

In the next five years two other priests reach retirement age

in one to five years there is the potential for 4 fewer priests due to their retirement, to say nothing of early retirements, sickness and deaths. This potentially leaves 20 priests to serve the diocese.

In the next 5-15 years 9 further priests reach retirement age, leaving 11 priests to serve the diocese.

Since 1990 the number of Male Religious Congregations in the diocese has gone from four to one (with one individual religious on loan to the diocese from his congregation) and for Female Congregations it has decreased from eleven religious communities to only six.

There are currently 4 permanent deacons serving in the diocese.

There is one seminarian who is in his second year of formation now.

PRIESTS FROM ABROAD

Priests coming to the diocese from elsewhere (having undergone and been successful in regards all immigration and safeguarding requirements) are always welcome but we cannot build a permanent strategy based on their greatly appreciated but temporary presence.

We are also conscious of the needs of the universal Church and the greater requirement for priests in developing countries:

For example according to 2010 nominal figures from the Vatican the typical ratio of priests to people in Galloway Diocese is one priest serving 1,800 parishioners.

In the Diocese of Mzuzu in Malawi, Africa it is 1 priest to every 8,095 parishioners.

In the Diocese of Parral, Mexico, the ratio is 1 priest to every 15,170 parishioners.

These figures are based on estimated catholic population not on mass census figures which are much lower.

There is a great need in developing countries for their own priests.

DIOCESAN CENSUS FIGURES

The annual census figures for the diocese tell their own story too:

In 1990 when the diocese had 55 priests and celebrated Sunday Mass in 53 churches the Mass census recorded 18,128 attending Mass;

In 2000 the diocese had 41 priests and celebrated Sunday Mass in 53 churches the annual census had fallen to 12,962;

By 2012 when we have 24 priests and celebrate Sunday Mass in 43 churches the figure recorded for attendance was 9,188. In 2013 we have 23 priests and 43 churches. The census for 2013 has not been taken at time of print.

In such a short period of time (22 years) Mass attendance by the lay faithful has dropped by approximately 43%.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1 What conclusions do you draw from this paper?
- 2 In light of this paper what are our priorities?
- 3 What practical steps are necessary to achieve those priorities?

