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Deanery Response Document

<p>Evangelisation: How can each deanery best evangelise in this current time bringing renewal to parish life?</p> <p>Imagine vibrant, joyful church life within your deanery. Envision life-giving faith experiences that have the power to actively introduce others to the love of Jesus Christ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are your hopes for deanery life in your community?• Where have you seen or experienced good examples of evangelisation and outreach?• In what ways could your deanery encourage people to deepen their existing relationship with Jesus Christ?• In what ways could your deanery introduce people to the love of Jesus Christ for the first time?	<p>The Deanery can best evangelise in 3 main areas, namely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Collaboration in liturgy and worshipb) Engagement with education and parish communities (including schools, colleges, universities and workplaces)c) Outreach to those currently disengaged with the formal church. <p>These strands of development have been set as the current priorities for the Deanery</p> <p>The hope is to establish faith communities in which all are engaged in active participation in the church. Such communities should be welcoming of all God’s children. This has to pay special attention to future generations. It should not ignore those currently engaged in church activities but should not be restricted to them. It should also pay attention to the ecumenical imperatives of the church – avoiding being inward-looking and narrowly focused on “being a practising Catholic” (eg only on attendance at Mass – important though that is.)</p> <p>There are good examples of evangelisation in a number of parishes in which there is extensive engagement with the poor and disadvantaged (eg Bl Duns Scotus).</p> <p>The Deanery may well encourage greater participation if there was an approach to ensuring young people attended Mass once per week – and make it clear this does not require to be on a Sunday (or Vigil). This might establish a habit of attendance.</p> <p>Other ways of encouraging a relationship with Jesus Christ is to have a range of “social activities” in which people reach out to the disadvantaged. Prayer and liturgical attendance on its own is not sufficient.</p> <p>The Pastoral Clusters established locally should consider pastoral initiatives, some of which might be in areas such as humanitarian aid and support of the poorest in society.</p>
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<p>Collaboration: How can deanery parishes work together in new ways to support each other?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What parishes in your deanery would be natural collaborators in sharing knowledge, expertise and leadership as we plan for the future?• What particular strengths and gifts have you identified across the parish communities in your deanery that will be helpful in this process?• Given the reduction in numbers attending Mass, particularly after the Covid pandemic, how do we respond as a Catholic community?	<p>The Deanery Council has identified the areas of responsibility at several levels, namely The Archdiocese; the Deanery, The Pastoral Clusters; The Parishes. There needs to be vertical and horizontal synergy across these levels.</p> <p>The Deanery Council has set up FOUR “Pastoral Clusters” of parishes which are either adjacent or have historic links with other parishes. These have been agreed and will form the basis of future work.</p> <p>The Deanery is blessed with a range of gifts of people and recognises that there are other resources beyond the Deanery Council which will require to be accessed as the Deanery develops.</p> <p>The issue of reduced numbers attending Mass might be addressed in several ways, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Encouraging weekly Mass attendance not being restricted to weekends;b) Co-ordination of Mass times across Pastoral clusters;c) Associating “pastoral works” with parishes. <p>A critical issue is not to focus only on current problems but to have a clear vision of hope and progress in a refreshed vision of the church locally.</p> <p>Covid and other health concerns are now simply part of “normal living” and there should not be a backward look to some “golden age” to which we wish to return. The world is rapidly changing and the church needs to change with it. So we need new vision, new structures, and new practices.</p>
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<p>Resources: What resources of people, finance and buildings does your deanery need to best serve these plans for evangelisation and collaboration?</p> <p><i>Priestly leadership and participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given fewer numbers of priests, how should Mass schedules and the celebration of the Sacraments in your deanery be reorganised?• Given the projected fall in the number of active Priests in the next few years; how can Priests best serve evangelisation efforts in your deanery? <p><i>Lay leadership and participation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can greater lay leadership and participation be encouraged in your deanery? <p><i>“Synodal Leadership”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What structures do you see being necessary to maximise the effectiveness of synodal leadership in which priests and laity contribute to the communities of faith and worship locally?	<p>The Deanery currently has 22 “active priests” in 21 parishes. It is anticipated that in 5 years time it will have 13 active priests; and probably in 10 years 7 priests. This presents a considerable challenge to the church, and specifically to this Deanery.</p> <p>The Pastoral clusters have been established to address this matter with Mass times coordinated to maximise opportunities for parishioners to attend Mass.</p> <p>A further way of addressing this issue is to suggest that parishioners are expected to attend Mass once in the week – but this could be midweek on evenings; or school Masses; etc. The notion of the church being alive only at weekends needs to be addressed at Archdiocesan and Deanery levels.</p> <p>The reduction in number of priests and the financial imperatives suggests that a process of parish re-organisation is absolutely necessary. This should emerge from the discussion of Pastoral Clusters. Some clear indication of the scale and nature of this should be a priority between September and December 2023 – avoiding planning blight and unnecessary anxiety.</p> <p>The synodal process should encourage greater responsibilities to be undertaken by lay representatives – freeing priests to undertake evangelisation and other work necessary for church life. How this collaboration might operate needs to be explored with care, since there are practical, ethical and legal considerations in devolving certain responsibilities to lay members of the community.</p> <p>There would much to be said for considering some formation and education of lay people as they take on certain responsibilities. There are many lay people who could contribute effectively to this training. This should be considered at Archdiocesan level and will require to be professionally resourced.</p>
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