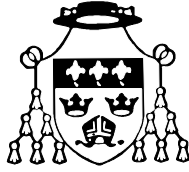


DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA



FORWARD & OUTWARD TOGETHER

Diocesan Pastoral Plan for our parish communities



2004

CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY BISHOP MICHAEL	3	TOGETHER IN PRAYER	37
INTRODUCTION	4	LIVING THE SACRAMENTS	39
Our Diocesan Family	5	Touching the heart	39
What is the Church for?	6	RCIA	40
Why a Diocesan Pastoral Plan?	6	Baptism	41
		Confirmation	43
CALLED TO HOLINESS	7	Eucharist	44
		Rediscovering Sunday	47
A COMMUNITY OF WELCOME	8	Services of Word & Communion	48
Our Diocesan Family	9	First Reconciliation & Communion	49
Our Cathedral	9	Reconciliation (Confession)	50
Our Parish Family	9	Anointing of the Sick	51
Renewing our parishes	10	Holy Matrimony	51
A truly Catholic welcome	10	Holy Orders	53
A welcoming liturgy	11	Priestly Vocations	54
Ministry of Welcome	11	Ongoing Formation of Clergy	54
Welcoming & including newcomers	11	Care of Clergy	55
Welcoming to Sunday Mass	12	Deacons	57
Social events	13		
A network of communities	13	RELIGIOUS LIFE	57
Less-active Catholics	13		
The stranger	15	FINANCES	58
People with disabilities	16		
The elderly, sick & housebound	17	NEW STRUCTURES	59
The retired	17	Deaneries (immediate)	59
Children and young people	17	Parish changes (immediate)	60
Our Catholic Schools	19	Parish changes (gradual)	61
Single people	19	Combining parishes (as needed)	63
The separated and divorced	19	Parish Clusters (immediate)	63
The ring of the Prodigal Son	20		
		APPENDICES	
A COMMUNITY OF MISSION	20	1. Towards One Mass	65
Holiness and welcoming love	21	2. Link People – one model	66
Care and loving-kindness	22	3. Youth Masses	67
Justice	24		
Communication	25		
Earthen vessels	26		
TOGETHER IN TRUST & PARTNERSHIP	26		
Parishes working together	26		
The Deanery	27		
The Cluster	28		
Communities within each parish	29		
Working together in the parish	29		
Needs and Skills Audit	30		
Lay involvement and leadership	31		
Training for lay ministry	32		
Limited terms of service	33		
Adult religious formation	33		
Working with other Christians	34		
Working with people of other faiths	35		
Structures for lay participation	36		



**In Christ,
we are together the Church.**

FOREWORD

My dear friends,

Your first response to this Diocesan Pastoral Plan may be that it is rather long! Yet more paper! I had to decide whether simply to produce yet another short document which repeated everything said in my previous documents, or to take seriously and to ‘harvest’ many of the thoughts and ideas which emerged from the two phases of ‘Forward and Outward Together.’

I have chosen the second option. It is important that you know you have been listened to, and heard. This document is largely the fruit of all the discussions among priests and people in our parishes and deaneries, and at diocesan gatherings. I hope many of you will recognise your own suggestions, perhaps even your own words. I have focused mainly on those thoughts most frequently echoed in parish and deanery reports. I am very grateful for all the time and thought that so many people across the diocese have given to this process over the last 18 months. For some of you, it has been worrying, disturbing, and perhaps even painful, as you have become more aware of the serious challenges we face in the years ahead, but I am sure it will bear fruit for us all.

Your second response may be to worry that too much is being asked of priests and people who are already overburdened. This plan is not intended to add to your worries or burdens: many people are far too busy as it is. We cannot do everything at once. Many of the ideas in this plan are already in operation; there is plenty of good practice across our diocese.

Even without this Diocesan Pastoral Plan, your parish and deanery discussions have already given you an agenda for future development. Every parish is different, and our approach must be flexible. I ask parishes, ‘clusters’ of parishes and deaneries to use this document as a basis for pastoral planning over the next five years, perhaps taking one or two topics at a time.

On the other hand, there is little point to all our work over the last year if this document becomes yet another ‘grand plan’ which sits on a shelf and gathers dust. We must work together to ensure that it has a positive and lasting effect. A key theme throughout the responses to ‘Forward and Outward Together’ is that we must be pro-active rather than re-active. This has to begin now – we do not have the luxury to put it off until later. Our progress will be carefully monitored.

The decisions and recommendations here are not set in stone. Things change in East Anglia, and we must change with them. The Plan will be regularly reviewed, especially after five years. But it should serve as a point of departure for our future together, a future full of hope and trust.

As Archbishop Oscar Romero once wrote, ‘It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest. For a “future not our own”.’ Please read the whole Pastoral Plan in the light of the full text from Romero on the back cover.

What is our main aim in all of this? It is not primarily for our own benefit that we seek to move forward and outward together, but for all the people of East Anglia. Jesus said, ‘I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!’ (Luke 12.49). East Anglia is mission territory, and the Risen Jesus calls us to set East Anglia on fire with his presence, and to fill our area with the Good News of salvation.

With my renewed thanks and my warmest good wishes,

Yours in Christ,

Rt Rev Michael Evans
Bishop of East Anglia

INTRODUCTION

When he arrived as Bishop of East Anglia in March 2003, Bishop Michael immediately set about a series of consultations about what were perceived to be the key priorities for our diocese over the next few years. On 26th March 2003, just a week after his ordination, the Diocesan College of Consultors (the seven Deans and five other priests), rooted in their long and varied experience of the diocese, gave the following ten priorities, all within the setting of the Lord's call to grow together in holiness, in faith and in love:

- the evangelisation of East Anglia: where is the Catholic Church in all this?
- becoming more outward looking (e.g. through overseas links)
- the formation of lay people for fuller participation and collaborative ministry, partly to help us face an imminent future with fewer priests, but much more importantly to enable lay people to play their full part in the life and mission of the Church
- better catechesis and adult education
- a review of parish, deanery and diocesan structures
- the welfare and ongoing formation of our priests and deacons
- a more pro-active approach to vocations promotion, with greater focus in both parish and school
- a renewed diocesan youth service, with a higher profile given to young people
- moving towards financial stability in order to resource our future together
- a review of the Schools Commission and Religious Education Commission.

The gathering of fifty of our priests and deacons in Merville in June 2003 echoed these priorities, and added some of their own.

- greater focus on spiritual renewal: the call to conversion, holiness and prayer
- a greater sense of mission
- realistic planning for our future together with fewer priests

- recognising the gifts of the laity, and lay formation leading to serious lay ministry and service
- a structured adult education programme
- viable and sustainable parish, deanery and diocesan structures
- more coordination and sharing of resources between parishes, and greater cooperation among priests
- a re-think of city/town centre ministries
- a much better sense of being a single diocesan family
- more focus on the Cathedral as the Mother Church of our diocese
- young people to take their proper place
- sharing best practice among parishes and dioceses
- better care for the clergy from 'ordination to the grave', and better ongoing formation

These same priorities arose again and again in discussions among lay people and clergy at parish, deanery and diocesan level.

The clergy meeting in Merville also asked that we dispel the attitude of 'something will happen one day.' There has been a growing sense over the last year that we no longer have the luxury of being able to sit back and wait a little longer.

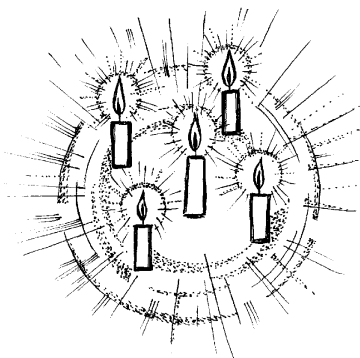
The March 2003 meeting of the College of Consultors agreed a new diocesan consultation process, echoing Bishop Alan Clark's 1988 Pastoral Plan ("Deepening and Widening our Faith") and taking up where Bishop Peter Smith's later "Sowing the Seed" had left off. This new diocesan process came to be called "Forward and Outward Together".

For twelve months, from May 2003 until May 2004, every parish and deanery has been involved in numerous discussions. There were also many individual responses. A lot of people gave much time to the process. Over 1,500 people were involved in the first phase of consultations, based on the bishop's paper "Forward & Outward Together" and the accompanying "Points to Ponder". These responses led to two further papers for the second phase: "Working Together" and "Towards New Structures".

There have also been parallel consultations and meetings at diocesan level on the age for First Communion and Confirmation, our work with Young People, Justice and Peace, Disability Awareness, and Marriage and Family Life ('Listening 2004'), as well as with our religious communities. Some of our Diocesan Commissions have also given time to exploring the best way forward. Alongside this, Fr David Bagstaff spent some of his sabbatical exploring how similar dioceses do things in the United States and here in England. The main results of our diocesan process are now brought together in this Diocesan Pastoral Plan. We are most grateful to all who have contributed in any way.

A draft version of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan was presented for discussion to a joint meeting of the parish priests of the diocese and the Council of Priests on 1st July 2004. A large majority (86%) approved the document as something on which we could move forward together; another 10% gave qualified approval; 4% were unhappy to move forward in this way. A few small revisions were made, and Bishop Michael has now endorsed this Diocesan Pastoral Plan as the policy for our whole diocesan family and its parishes.

No such plan is of use unless it is practical and realistic, and is followed up carefully. Although a range of views were expressed in parish, deanery and individual responses to 'Forward and Outward Together', we can only move realistically into the future on the basis of Catholic teaching and current Catholic discipline. People will continue to ask challenging questions, and these need to be heard and answered, but a Bishop can only lead his diocese within the fullness of the Catholic tradition, united in full communion with the Holy Father and his brother bishops, and drawing his inspiration especially from the documents of the Second Vatican Council.



OUR DIOCESAN FAMILY

Bishop Michael launched our diocesan review on the basis of the experience and priorities of the Diocesan College of Consultors and others. As this process has continued, the Bishop has got to know the diocese in some way, visiting every Catholic school before the Summer of 2003 and every parish at least once before Easter 2004. The best source of detailed insight and information on our parishes, deaneries and the diocese has come from the reflections given in reports as part of the diocesan process. It is those reports which have determined the way forward.

East Anglia is a geographically large diocese with a relatively small and scattered Catholic population. Catholics are a lower percentage of the population in East Anglia than in most other parts of the country. Just under 20,000 people come to Mass most Sundays, about half of whom live in the four main urban centres of Cambridge, Ipswich, Norwich and Peterborough. The distances between rural parishes present us with a particular challenge when it comes to exploring practical and realistic ways to share limited personnel and other resources. The diocese is faced with an imminent future with far fewer priests, and yet a growing population in East Anglia, with large housing developments proposed for Cambridgeshire and other areas.

Although three people are beginning seminary formation in September 2004, the first for our diocese for many years, we have very few priests now available to replace those due to retire over the next ten years. We now have 56 parishes in our diocese. If all our priests were to preserve reasonably good health and none retire until aged 75, fifteen parish priests would retire over the next ten years. The actual figure is likely to be larger.

Clearly we cannot preserve all our parishes as they are, and we need to make practical decisions now about how to prepare for that future rather than react to each situation as it arises. Some of those decisions need to be implemented immediately. Some will need to come into play over the next few years. Others may never be necessary if our situation changes radically.



WHAT IS THE CHURCH FOR?

Each of our parish communities is a portion of the 'Local Church' of the Diocese of East Anglia. We can make sense of our future together only if we understand as fully as possible the nature and mission of the Church. What is the Church? And what is it for? Any serious answer to these questions would require a long document, but the work has already been done. The New Testament, along with two key documents of the Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, remain the key to understanding our identity. Certain ideas, however, remain central to Catholic teaching on the Church.

We are not just a community: we are a community 'in Christ'. Through our Baptism and Confirmation, and our regular participation in the Mass, the Holy Spirit draws us into the mystery of Christ and into the inner life of the Holy Trinity.

The Risen Lord says to each of us: 'Come to me', 'Follow me' and 'Go in my name'. We are transformed by the touch of his presence and become new people, ready and able to follow him and to live a new life 'in Christ.' We are sent forth by him into the world to proclaim with joy the good news of God's love for all humanity, and 'to make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28.20). Jesus' call to communion with his life ('Come to me') is inseparable from his call to communion with his mission ('Go in my name'). Jesus was deeply conscious of being 'sent' by the Father. If we are truly united with Christ as his bride and his body, and as branches of the vine, we will also be drawn into his mission to bring God's saving love to the world.

The Second Vatican Council proclaimed the mission of the whole Church in its summary of the vocation of every individual: each 'must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus, and as a sign that God lives' (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 38).

As the Second Vatican Council taught, 'The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. For it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she takes her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father' (*Ad Gentes*, n. 1). Communion with the Triune God is the very life of the Church; communion with the mission of God's Son and Spirit is the very mission of the Church.

WHY A DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN?

One thing needs to be said from the beginning. This Pastoral Plan does not cover everything. It does not even cover everything that is most important. For example, little is said about our Catholic schools which are so vital to our diocesan life. Although we have tried to take up many if not most of the key points from the two phases of discussions for 'Forward & Outward Together', many issues can only be handled at local level, and many others still require ongoing discussion. Our hope is that this limited plan will help us move forward in certain key areas, while in no way suggesting that this is all there is to be done, or that it can all be done at once. We will need to take up many different issues together over the coming years. We can work together to develop further guidelines on particular issues (e.g. care of marriage & family life; ecumenism; dialogue with Muslims).

Some of the things required or suggested here are already well established in many parishes. Someone recently suggested that the Catholic Church in our country is dying. That is not the impression we get from our parishes in East Anglia. There are many signs of life and many thriving communities with good practice to share. Part of the aim of this Pastoral Plan is to share such good practice, and to move towards a greater sense of unity and coherence in the way we do things together as parishes within a single diocesan family while leaving room for each parish to develop in its own distinctive way.

'Many of the themes covered in Bishop Michael's paper *Working Together* were met with heartfelt cries of "We should have been doing this years ago!" Many of the proposed priorities and initiatives have been desired for many years (e.g. better welcome, better community, better sharing, more lay leadership, etc) and need attention anyway.' (*St Mary's parish, Ipswich*)



The Pastoral Plan is divided into two parts.

PART 1: General Pastoral Plan

This covers a range of diocesan policies and recommendations, rooted in the initial round of discussions for “Forward & Outward Together” and responses to the document “Working Together”.

There are three categories of statements:

- (1) **Policies** to be implemented everywhere across the diocese.
- (2) **Recommendations** to be given full consideration in each parish and deanery.
- (3) **Points for further consideration** by each parish and deanery, and the diocese.

The plan should be used as a check-list by priests and people together as they present pastoral plans for the future of parishes, clusters of parishes, deaneries and the whole diocese. Parish and Deanery Councils of different kinds should use it as an agenda for their ongoing work. It will also be used as a basis for the Bishop’s visitation of parishes.

PART 2: Structural Changes (page 59)

This covers decisions concerning structural changes regarding individual parishes, clustering of parishes and deaneries, some to be implemented immediately, others to be implemented gradually as appropriate.



This Plan is not intended to be the last word on anything. It is open to ongoing and periodic review. As the Second Vatican Council reminded us, the Church is in need of continual renewal. Some things will not work. Other better ideas will come to light. This Pastoral Plan will be presented for radical review by the whole diocese in 2009, but there needs to be flexibility between now and then. Such a plan can only be provisional. Our situation may change for better or worse. We need continuity with our past; we need to consolidate all the good that we already have; but we are also a pilgrim people, and we need to keep moving “Forward and Outward Together” if we are truly to be the Church of Jesus Christ.

“People want more church – not less”

(St Mary’s parish, Ipswich)



The motto of the Synod of Churches in the Holy Land, presenting its *General Pastoral Plan* in 2000, sums up in three phrases all that our own pastoral plan seeks to enable and encourage:

- Believing in Christ
- Participating in the Church
- Witnessing in Society

We need to hold together those three callings if we are to be truly the Church in East Anglia. All three belong together, and we cannot truly have one without the other.



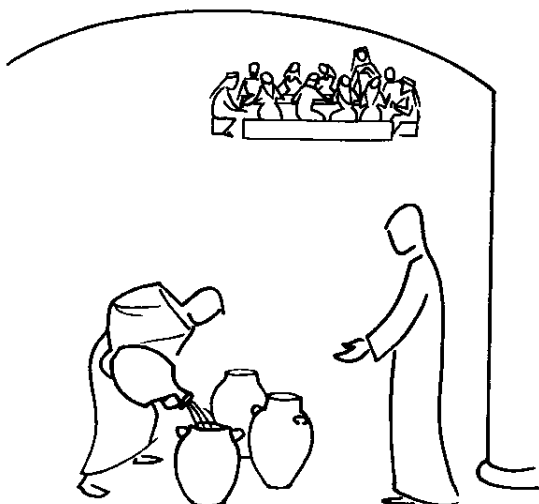
CALLED TO HOLINESS

Much in this pastoral plan concerns new ways of doing things, new structures for our future, and simply sharing good practice with one another. But there is no point to any of this unless it serves our fundamental vocation from God: the call to holiness, the call to perfect love of God and one another. Our prayer for this diocese and our parishes is that the Holy Spirit will renew us in love, and set us on fire so that others can catch fire from us.

Our personal lives, our families and homes, our schools and parish communities, are ‘holy ground’ where we encounter the transforming presence of the Living God. We are called to be like the burning bush Moses was drawn to in the desert: we should be people on fire with God’s love within us, so that others will be attracted towards us and meet God himself.

But holiness is never a private affair. It is deeply personal, but never private. We are called to love God with all our being, and to love one another as Jesus has loved us. Growing together in loving community is essential to being truly holy. We are called to be beacons of holiness – in our personal lives and in our communion with each other.

We are all called to turn our lives away from sin and towards the Risen Lord. Only God, ‘the fountain of all holiness’, can make us holy, and it is always by the power of his love – the Holy Spirit - that he renews and transforms us from within.



Fill these jars with water (Jn.2.7)

As Jesus changed the water into wine at Cana for the wedding guests to drink, so he seeks to transform our lives by his Holy Spirit so that the spiritual thirst of others may be quenched. Our personal growth in holiness is a gift for others, and that of others a gift of God to us.

We are not asked to do all this on our own. Above all, Christ is with us. Without Christ we can do nothing. We are totally dependent on his free gift of grace, the Gift of the Holy Spirit, the love which God pours into our hearts.

But also, our Diocese of East Anglia today and in the years ahead is not alone. We are united in full communion with the Catholic Church throughout the world, led and inspired by the ministry of the Holy Father and his brother bishops. Most of the challenges we face we share with the other dioceses in the United Kingdom, and with much of the western world. We can support and help each other. Our diocese is now united in special friendship with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Cambodian Diocese of Battambang. Throughout our own pastoral plan, we include quotations from the *General Pastoral Plan* of the Holy Land, which flowed from their Synod in 2000. Our problems and challenges are not unique, and we can learn much from our twin dioceses in the Holy Land and Cambodia. And we are in their prayers. We are also deeply united through our baptism with all the other Christians of East Anglia, and there are many ways in which we can grow together in faith and witness.

Nor are we simply united with the Church of today. We are supported and inspired by all those who have gone before us in East Anglia, by centuries of faithful Christians who have lived the Gospel message and sometimes given their life for their Christian and Catholic

faith. We think especially of St Felix who came from Gaul in 630 to work for the conversion of the East Angles: we are all called, like him, to preach the Good News to the people of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. We are united with all the saints from East Anglia, with St Etheldreda and St Edmund, Saints Botolph, Fursey, Walstan and Withburga, and with the Blessed Martyrs of East Anglia who gave their lives for the Catholic Church. We can be sure that St Henry Morse, St Robert Southwell and St Henry Walpole, all born in Norfolk, will keep us in their prayers. And above all, of course, our diocesan family is commended to the prayers of Our Lady of Walsingham, the Christ-Bearer and God-Bearer: we pray that our personal, parish and diocesan lives will be so overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and so full of the mysterious presence of Christ that we, like Mary, may bring Christ himself to all the people of East Anglia. That is our mission, that is our calling, that is our sacred service to our world.



A COMMUNITY OF WELCOME

Nearly all parish responses highlighted the need to become more welcoming communities. This is one of the main ways we will spread the Good News of Jesus together: by becoming visible beacons of God's light, communities full of the joyful and welcoming love of the Risen Lord. Other people will be drawn towards our parish life and worship, and encounter there the presence of Christ.

The 'gift of community' lies at the heart of God's plan for humanity. The Lord came to 'gather together the scattered children of God', and unity is central to a truly Catholic understanding of the 'salvation' Christ came to bring. Only if we are truly united with each other can we be a credible sign to the world of the Good News of Jesus Christ. 'Being together' and 'going forth', Community and Mission, belong inseparably together.

God our Father,
we rejoice in the faith that draws us together,
aware that selfishness can drive us apart.
Let your encouragement be our constant strength.
Keep us one in the love that has sealed our lives,
and help us to live as one family
the gospel we profess.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

*Roman Missal: alternative opening prayer for the
11th Sunday of the Year.*

Our diocesan family

Any church community is more than a gathering of people. It is a family. We should think of the diocese as our diocesan family, and each parish as a parish family. Once we think and feel that way, we may well have a very different attitude to much of church life, worship and mission.

Within the great worldwide family of the Catholic Church, we belong first to the family of the Diocese of East Anglia, gathered around the Bishop and with St John's Cathedral as our Mother Church.

Your parish, and every parish in East Anglia, is an integral part of our diocese. We all belong to one great diocesan family, served by the Bishop as teacher, priest and shepherd of the whole diocese, and by your priests and deacons as his co-workers.

St John's Cathedral in Norwich is the Catholic cathedral for all of East Anglia, for every parish and for every Catholic. It is as much the Catholic cathedral for Cambridge, Ipswich and Peterborough as it is for Norwich itself. It is the Mother Church for the whole of our diocesan family, and the visible focal point of our life and worship together. That means it is your church, and a place where you belong. There has been a very generous response from the diocese to the first phase of the Cathedral Appeal: our hope is that the developments there will make the cathedral even more welcoming for everyone.

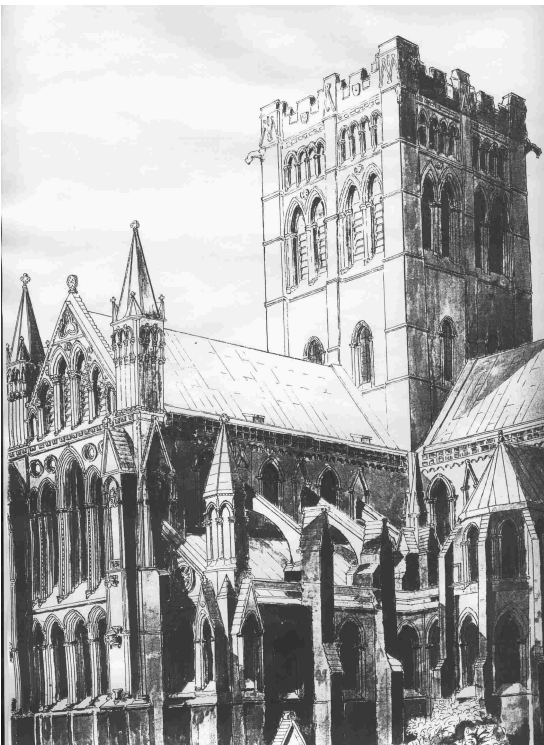


illustration by Derek Mahoney from the cathedral parish

Many reports highlighted the fact that we are blessed with two focal points in our diocese: our Catholic Cathedral in Norwich and the National Shrine at Walsingham. We need to make more of both places in our diocesan life. Neither is in competition with the other: each has its distinctive role. We intend to hold more diocesan events in each place.

Our diocese is divided into parishes, each of which is "a living cell of the body of the diocese" (*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, p. 98). No parish can exist in self-sufficient isolation. Each is an integral part of the diocese, and needs to be open in welcome to other parishes. Collaboration among parishes is essential, not just because we need to but because it is part of what it means to be truly Catholic.



Our parish family

Pope John Paul reminds us that each parish should be "a fraternal and welcoming family home, where those who have been baptised and confirmed become aware of forming the people of God" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 67). A parish is "a Eucharistic community" with the Mass as the "summit and source" of its whole life and mission, but it is more than simply a 'Mass station', a place where we go for Mass.

Every parish should be a community of faith and of love. We need to cultivate a spirit of belonging among all members, so that everyone really thinks of the parish as their family and their church as their home. The natural extended family has been weakened in our society in recent years. Every church community should be an extended family for all its members.

Each parish is a network or 'cluster' of communities. Some parishes have more than one place of worship, and this will probably be the norm in the future with fewer priests. No

matter how strong and distinctive those communities may be, each is a fully integral part of a single parish family served and led by its parish priest. No matter how many places of worship there are in a parish, the whole community should see the one parish church, after which the parish is called, as its centre. Just as an example, the distinct Catholic communities at Blakeney, Burnham Market and Wells, each with their own church, are integral parts of the parish of Walsingham, with the parish church in Walsingham as their local ‘mother church’.

There should be a real desire in such parishes for distinct communities to share their life together.

St Paul’s image of the Church as the Body of Christ is a challenge to every parish and to each community within each parish. It is well worth re-reading 1 Corinthians 12.14-26, and applying St Paul’s words to our diocese and our parishes. We are all different, but we are all essential parts of a single body. And we all need each other. No community within a parish can say to another community, ‘I do not need you’; no parish can say to another parish, ‘I do not need you’. And as St Paul says, “If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honour, all parts enjoy it” (12.26). What are the implications of these words for your particular parish, in your particular situation today, and as part of the Diocese of East Anglia? What would St Paul be saying to us today? This might be a useful reflection for a parish meeting.

But we must not limit our understanding of ‘parish’ to the needs of its members. Any truly Catholic parish will have a missionary orientation. “The parish is not a community for itself, it is rather a community for mission (an apostolic community)” (*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, p. 96).



Renewing our parishes

There is little doubt that the parish will remain the fundamental local community to which we belong as Catholics, although perhaps a different kind of parish than we have been accustomed to. Although there is much renewal which can happen at diocesan, deanery and ‘cluster’ level, it is above all the renewal of each parish family – and of each individual, family and community within that

parish – which is the key to our moving forward and outward together.

There is no room for elitism of any kind in Catholic spirituality. No one Catholic group or movement can say to another, ‘we are better than others’ or ‘we are the way’. Organisations and movements suit some but not others. It is the diocese and parish to which we most truly belong. Any groups we join should always enhance and enrich our involvement in the life, worship and mission of our local parish and diocese.

Our primary focus should be the spiritual renewal of our local parish communities in faithfulness to the Scriptures, and of course to our whole Catholic Tradition in general and to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council in particular.

“The parish is called to be the centre of Christian life in the future and, as a consequence, the centre of our continuing pastoral effort. The renewal of our Churches, before all else, must pass through the renewal of our parishes”
(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p. 104)

The most important part of our diocesan process is not this Pastoral Plan, but rather the positive and practical fruits of your local discussions. This plan is simply the bringing together of your ideas, hopes and dreams. Each parish should spend time making full use of the reports produced during the two phases of ‘Forward & Outward Together’.



A truly Catholic welcome

One meaning of the word “catholic” is “all-embracing” or “inclusive”. Every parish needs to become more truly catholic in this sense, not simply being ready to accept anyone who comes to us, but reaching out pro-actively and positively to all in the name of Christ.

How can we make our parish more fully inclusive, so that everyone feels truly welcome? Truly Catholic unity is unity in diversity. We rejoice in being able to be truly united while cherishing and nurturing distinctive cultures, abilities and contributions. The challenge is to ‘count everyone in’, creating a culture of inclusion.

“ALL need inclusion NOW”
(Ipswich Deanery)

A welcoming liturgy

The heart of parish life is the Sunday celebration of Mass. It is there that we worship God together. It is there we are nourished together by the Word of God, the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation, and empowered afresh by the Holy Spirit for our calling to bring Christ to our world. It is there that we become more truly the Body of Christ, so that we can go forth together to witness to Christ in our daily lives and share with others the Good News of salvation.

It is at Sunday Mass that our Catholic welcome must be most powerfully evident and experienced: before Mass, during Mass and after Mass.

Ministry of Welcome

The ministry of welcome is not limited to those few people who greet us in the church porch on the way into Mass. If we are truly a family, then we are all called to make the effort to welcome, to reach out with a smile to newcomers, strangers and those returning to parish life after a time away. No matter how welcoming our official 'welcomers' may be, people will not feel truly welcome unless they are made welcome by all.

'Do not let your love be a pretence, but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers and sisters should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come, and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them, and you should make hospitality your special care' (*St Paul to the Romans 12.9-13*).

Imagine someone being invited to join your family for Sunday lunch: you might welcome them wonderfully at the front door, but they may then be ignored by the rest of the family! We need to develop not simply a limited ministry of welcome, but welcoming communities. That is far more of a challenge, but essential. What is most needed is a change of heart, so that we become people of welcome, relaxed and joyful in our faith and open to all.

Our diocesan policy is that the diocesan family and every parish community should be pro-actively welcoming to all. Every parish is asked to explore the very heart of the way in which it welcomes all. The following recommendations are based on the good practice of many parishes.

Welcoming & including newcomers

- (1) The word 'Welcome' needs to be seen and heard. Many parishes have a '**welcome**' sign outside the church or in the porch, often in many different languages.
- (2) **Welcome leaflets** should be available in the church porch, so that newcomers can complete them and hand them into the parish office or presbytery.
- (3) **A welcome pack** should be given to all newcomers, with a letter of welcome from the parish priest and information on parish life, including the names and addresses of key people in the parish.
- (4) **A welcome card** from the parish could be posted to each newcomer.
- (5) As a priority, the parish clergy should **visit** each newcomer within a few weeks.
- (6) **A house blessing** can be offered to all newcomers.
- (7) **A social event** could be organised every few months for newcomers, hosted by the clergy and parish representatives.
- (8) If a 'Parish Link Scheme' is in place (see later), the **Link Person** should visit the newcomer as soon as possible.

'Although an introductory pack for new parishioners is good, it cannot replace the personal sense of welcome that a parish offers, and a sensitivity by all to welcome new faces as part of a ministry of hospitality' (*individual response*)



Welcoming to Sunday Mass

- (1) Although it is vital that every member of the parish community be welcoming, there is an important **ministry of welcome** before each Mass on Sunday. Most parishes now have some form of 'welcomers' before Sunday Mass, but this may need to be developed.

Parish reports stressed that welcomers need to be chosen carefully. Their role is not simply to hand out newsletters and hymn books, but to be the welcoming face of the parish community as people arrive for Mass. Ideally, this suggests people who can gradually get to know those who regularly come to a particular Mass; greet them by name; notice and focus on newcomers and visitors; give special care to anyone who has particular needs.

If this role is understood in this way, it becomes a true ministry of welcome rather than simply a job to be carried out. Not everyone is suited for such a vital service. It may be worth considering a formation day for such ministers, either in the parish, cluster of neighbouring parishes or at deanery level. Those taking up this ministry could then have time to reflect on the spirituality of welcome, as well as share practical ideas for making welcome.

- (2) The special service of **usher** can be useful in helping newcomers, visitors and late-comers to find a seat at Mass without undue embarrassment.

'It was felt especially important to promote a community in which people were known by name'
(*St Peter & All Souls parish, Peterborough*)

- (3) **We need to challenge everyone at Mass to 'make hospitality their special care'**. The prayers of the Mass, especially the Eucharistic Prayers, highlight God's will that by taking part in the Mass we 'grow in love' and become 'one body, one spirit in Christ'. Our parishes would be far more welcoming if everyone at Mass made a point of getting to know one new person each Sunday, perhaps on the way into Mass or the way out.

Gradually we get to know each other by name, recognise each other in the street and the supermarket, and become more of a family.

- (4) **An essential part of making people welcome at Mass is the way we celebrate the liturgy together.** The 'ministry of welcome' includes making sure everyone can hear (e.g. better training for our readers; improving the sound system; making sure there is a loop-system; use of sign language), and ensuring that active participation is possible for everyone (e.g. through the choice of music; provision for people with disabilities; full use of the cultural diversity and riches of the parish community).
- (5) **The church building itself must be a warm, welcoming and inviting place of worship.** Creative use of art, flowers, banners, etc can help. Good lighting is essential, creating an atmosphere between 'gloom'; and 'glare'. The church building is a sacred space to be cared for with love and to be kept open as long as possible each day as a sign of God's welcome to all.

'A beautiful liturgy and a caring church
will attract young and old alike'
(*Hunstanton parish*)

Welcome after Sunday Mass

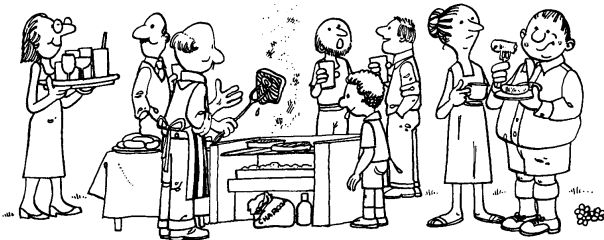
- (1) As far as possible, and taking account of resources and the time of Mass, some kind of social gathering (coffee, tea & biscuits, etc) should be available after Sunday Mass. This tends to work best after the mid-morning Mass when people are in no hurry to get home to prepare meals, but it may be worth experimenting after other Masses as well. Such gatherings are a good opportunity for people to mix and get to know each other. and to feel more 'at home' in the parish setting.
- (2) Whenever possible, the parish priest and other clergy should be in the church porch or outside the church after every Mass to greet people as they leave.



Social events

Once we understand that growing in holiness involves growing in unity, and that God's gift of salvation is a gift of community (of 'at-onement'), then we appreciate more strongly that coming together as a family for social activities is a fundamental part of parish life. It is not simply a way of drawing people into the parish; coming together is central to the life and witness of the Church.

- (1) Parishes and the communities which form them are strongly encouraged to develop a **range of social events** throughout the year, some for the whole parish family, and others for particular groups of parishioners (Over-Sixties, Young Wives, Men's Group, etc). Family-friendly events open to the whole parish are particularly important.
- (2) Each parish could have a **Social Events Committee**, with people representing the range of parish life. Their role is to initiate and facilitate the social life of the parish.



A network of communities

(see a model scheme on page 60 of this booklet)

Even a parish with a relatively small congregation is a 'network of communities'. Without in any way undermining the essential unity of the parish, there may be room for developing smaller, local Catholic communities (e.g. in each village or in neighbourhoods of our towns and cities). Larger villages or communities, whether or not they retain a weekly Sunday Mass, can develop their own local ways to ensure the cohesion and needs of that community. A parish could be divided into viable areas (with, for example, 10-20 known Catholic

households), each with a lay 'link person' or couple responsible for getting to know each household, liaising with the parish priest about individual needs, and organising occasional gatherings (e.g. purely social, a House Mass, reflection on the Sunday readings).

Such a scheme would provide an important way for developing responsible and collaborative lay leadership at local level. It can also be an effective support for reaching out to the lapsed, and caring for the sick, elderly and housebound. Link people might play a part in organising transport to Mass for people from their area. An annual gathering of such link people may provide a valuable forum for discussing pastoral strategies.

The 1987 Synod of Bishops in Rome urged each parish to become 'a dynamic community of communities'. This theme has been frequently echoed by Pope John Paul:

"One way of renewing parishes, especially urgent for parishes in large cities, might be to consider the parish as a community of communities and movements. It seems timely therefore to form ecclesial communities and groups of a size that allows for true human relationships' (*Ecclesia in America*; 1999)

"The Church as Family cannot reach all her possibilities as Church unless she is divided into communities small enough to foster close human relationships" (*Ecclesia in Africa*; 1995)

"So that all parishes of this kind may be truly communities of Christians, local ecclesial authorities ought to foster...small basic or so-called 'living' communities where the faithful can communicate the word of God and express it in service and love to one another; these communities are true expressions of ecclesial communion and centres of evangelisation in communion with their pastors." (*Christifideles Laici*; 1988)

Reconciling & welcoming less-active Catholics

On average, over three quarters of Catholics do not come to Mass regularly. Some have become alienated from parish life for some reason; others have simply drifted away. We need to appreciate the delicate issues sometimes involved in making contact with such Catholics, and possible past hurts. Sometimes vicarious apologies may be necessary as a way of moving forward.

“In our day and age, many people now stand on the threshold of our Church. They have many questions. Do I really want to go in? Will there be someone to open the door to me? What will stepping over the threshold involve? Might I feel trapped? Do I really want to be here anyway? Would I rather walk away? Will I be made welcome? If I walk away now, will I ever be able to come back? Whether it is on the presbytery doorstep or at the church or at the school entrance, standing on the threshold can be a nerve wracking experience, especially for those who, for whatever reason, do not feel at home in a church situation.”
(On the Threshold, Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, 2000; p.5)

Many are awaiting an invitation to return, to ‘come home’. That call has to be made explicitly and in an inviting and welcoming way. Ideally, a Catholic friend or neighbour should accompany them to Mass. Participation in social events can often be a way back into the liturgical life of the Church. Friendly contact with priests and people is essential. Something like the ‘Link Scheme’ outlined above, or some form of visiting by parishioners, can make a big contribution.

- (1) **The diocese will provide a leaflet aimed at less-active Catholics**, with a message from the bishop and space for each parish to print local details (Mass times, etc). Alternatively, parishes could produce their own leaflet.
- (2) Every parish should develop an **outreach programme** to less-active Catholics, using either the diocesan leaflet or their own.
- (3) **The parish newsletter** could be delivered to less-active Catholics.
- (4) A general distribution of **cards for Christmas and Easter**, with details of Mass times (perhaps with other churches) is a simple but effective outreach.
- (5) **Occasional adverts** in local newspapers extending a welcome to newcomers and less-active Catholics may reach those untouched by other forms of outreach.
- (6) Some parishes find helpful an informal **‘Come and See’** evening as a way of introducing people to the way the Catholic Church is

today and to the life of a particular community. This could be advertised in the local newspapers.

- (7) The diocese will **explore existing programmes** for reaching out to less-active Catholics, and provide training days on suitable schemes (e.g. *Landings*).
- (8) **The diocesan theme for 2005 will be both ‘The Sacrament of Forgiveness and Reconciliation’ and ‘reconciling less-active Catholics’.**
- (9) Generally, we need to develop a culture of welcome and friendship so that returning Catholics, visitors and newcomers do not slip through the net. We should seek to attract and inspire – rather than worry – others back to involvement in the church.



“COMING HOME”

“We want to let our inactive brothers and sisters know that they always have a place in the Church and that we are hurt by their absence – as they are. We want to show our regret for any misunderstandings or mistreatment. And we want them to see that, however they feel about the Church, we want to talk with them, share with them, and accept them as brothers and sisters. Every Catholic can be a minister of welcome, reconciliation and understanding to those who have stopped practising the faith’
(Go & Make Disciples, US Bishops, 1993)



Welcoming and including the stranger

East Anglia is now a far more culturally diverse part of the country than it used to be. This is something in which to rejoice rather than lament. We belong to a world-wide Church which embraces as fully equal people of every nation, language and race. Our Catholic faith requires us to speak out openly and clearly against all forms of racism and discrimination, and to oppose any political party or organisation which seeks to divide people rather than unite them. Such cultural differences are an enrichment to our Catholic unity. To be fully Catholic is to be all-embracing and all-welcoming. To be Catholic is to be open to what we can receive from other cultures, and to be ready to celebrate and to share our gifts with each other.

**‘I was a stranger,
and you made me welcome’**
(Matthew 25.35)

We have long had among us in East Anglia significant numbers of Catholics from Italy and Poland. In the last few years, many thousands of Portuguese-speakers have come to live here with us. We have also been enriched by large numbers of Filipino nurses, as well as other people from all over the world.

There is sometimes a tension between the desire of such communities to retain their distinctiveness and yet also a desire to become integrated into our society. The Catholic Church has an important role to play, as ‘unity in diversity’ lies at the heart of our catholicity.

Some communities (e.g. Italians and Poles) are gradually becoming more integrated into ordinary Catholic life. Some of our parish communities have made considerable efforts to welcome the Portuguese migrant workers. As the process of integration continues, there are ways which we might use to make diverse groups feel more ‘at home’ in our ordinary parish lives. These are only a few examples:

- (1) **Copies of the Scripture readings and prayers for Sunday Mass could be provided in Portuguese.** It would be helpful to have the main English text alongside the Portuguese text, to help people follow the Mass.
- (2) All or part of one of the **readings** could be read in Portuguese as well as English at Mass.

- (3) **Place a ‘Welcome to our Catholic Church’ sign in Portuguese outside the church.** Leave ‘Welcome’ leaflets in Portuguese in the church porch (including information on Catholic schools), along with government leaflets available in Portuguese on the rights of migrant workers, etc.
- (4) Those from distinct communities could be invited to **sing** a liturgical song from their country at Mass, or contribute some of their distinctive liturgical customs.
- (5) People from other countries and cultures are often delighted to have the opportunity to talk about their country, or to provide meals and social events from their countries.
- (6) Organise **English language classes** for Portuguese-speakers, and encourage all parishioners to learn some **basic Portuguese** (at very least, words of greeting) in order to be more welcoming. The latter could be combined with a social event.
- (7) The special annual celebrations of such communities can be marked each year, in the liturgy and in social activities.

Everything suggested for welcoming Portuguese speakers also applies to any other group of people as they arrive in our area. We also need to be aware of the particular needs of migrants who are not Catholics, but who still need to be made welcome in our local communities (e.g. Chinese).

‘Continue to love each other like brothers and sisters, and remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without knowing it’
(Hebrews 13.1)



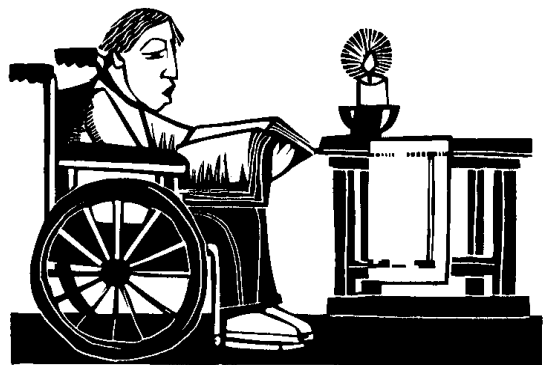
Welcoming and including people with disabilities

As a fully-inclusive community, the Catholic Church should in all ways be an example of 'best practice' regarding our welcome of people with disabilities of any kind. This is not simply a matter of fulfilling our legal obligations under the 'Disability Discrimination Act' (1995), but of being truly catholic in the breadth of our inclusiveness. In 1998, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales published a document entitled *Valuing Difference*. The very title sums up the Catholic approach to including people with disabilities in all aspects of the life and mission of the Church, and of showing respect, value and equality to all, no matter what their ability. People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the world; up to 20% of us have a disability of some kind. Every parish needs to ask itself: how can we better make the Gospel message, our parish community, growth in holiness, and forms of ministry and mission accessible to people with disabilities? People with disabilities are first and foremost people with abilities, gifted people with much to share.

- (1) **Each parish should have one or two representatives** responsible for ensuring the full implementation of the Disability Implementation Act (1995) and of working towards a parish community which is fully inclusive of people with disabilities.
- (2) **Every parish needs to carry out a full audit of its facilities and activities with a view to enhancing access for people with disabilities.** Useful materials were provided to all parishes after our diocesan disability study in March 2004.
- (3) **Parishes are required by law to make all reasonable adjustments in order to make their liturgy and community life accessible to people with disabilities.** This includes necessary alterations to physical features (e.g. ramps and wider doorways for wheelchair users; suitable toilet facilities; providing additional help; adapting existing parish services and catechetical programmes).

- (4) **Our liturgy must be celebrated in such a way that people with disabilities are included as fully as possible.** This includes practical steps such as ensuring that a good loop-system is installed; provision of large-print, Braille and taped newsletters etc; use of signing when possible; provision of suitable spaces for wheelchairs; clear marking of steps and uneven surfaces; providing suitable transport to Mass. The question to ask is: what are the barriers which prevent people with disabilities from full active involvement in our parish life and worship? We must then do all we can to remove those barriers. The first people to ask are the experts: ask people in your parish with disabilities to tell you what they need.

- (5) **Our forms of ministry should be open to people with disabilities.** For example, can we provide a microphone for a reader in a wheelchair? Do we invite people in wheelchairs or with learning difficulties to bring up the offertory gifts, to minister Holy Communion, to serve at the altar? For example, what is there to stop a person with Downs Syndrome from being an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion?



- (6) Our catechetical programmes, parish social life, youth activities and every other aspect of parish life must be as fully inclusive as possible.



Welcoming and including the elderly, the sick and the housebound

Our Catholic welcome includes people of all ages, and must never neglect the sick and the elderly who have given and continue to give so much to the life of the Church. Those who cannot come to Mass need to be kept 'in touch' with the parish family:

- (1) **Through visits** by members of the parish community, and the opportunity to receive **Holy Communion** especially from Sunday Mass. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion can make this possible. Care of the sick and housebound always remain a very important part of the ministry of priests and deacons.
- (2) **Social events** for older parishioners (e.g. over 60s) are often very popular. These might include a fortnightly or monthly Over-Sixties Lunch (with home-made soup, rolls, tea and coffee), perhaps with entertainment of some kind.
- (3) **Tapes of Sunday Mass** can be a great support to housebound people.
- (4) The sick and housebound should receive copies of **parish newsletters and diocesan newspapers**, and be made to feel as fully as possible part of parish life.
- (5) The sick and housebound have a vital role to play in the life of the church, through their **personal witness and by becoming power-houses of prayer**. They could be invited to be prayer-partners for children and young people preparing for First Communion and Confirmation, for couples preparing for Marriage and students for the Priesthood and Diaconate.



Welcome and including the retired

As one parish pointed out, there are many parishes in our diocese where most people join through retirement rather than baptism! Retired people have their own needs. They also have much to contribute to the life, worship and mission of the church, including the gift of time.



Welcoming and including our children and young people

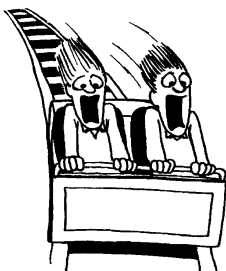
Our children, teenagers and young adults are a vital part of our church community. They are not simply the Church of Tomorrow: they are also the Church of Today. We must do all we can to give them a sense of welcome and belonging, of being valued and included. Young people have a tremendous amount to give to our parish and diocesan life. When allowed and encouraged to do so, many take up the opportunity with enthusiasm. We need to be seen to place our confidence in the young, and to include them fully in the life of the Catholic Church in East Anglia.

Developing youth work in East Anglia is particularly challenging because of the scattered nature of our Catholic communities and the travel difficulties involved. We may need to organise diocesan events which include activities for parents who have driven their young people to the events.

- (1) **Children and young people should be included as fully as possible in each ordinary Sunday Mass**, for example as welcomers, ministers of the word (readers), collectors, offertory bearers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (once confirmed and aged 15).
- (2) A strong and well-led body of **altar servers** remains a proven and well-established way to provide a way for young people to come together. When social activities are linked with their ministry, such a group can be an excellent focus for 'faith, food and fun'. The diocese hopes to arrange an annual event for altar servers.
- (3) Care should be taken to involve **children** at Mass, making full use of the options and flexibility provided for by the Church's liturgical documents. Special reference should be made to the *Directory for Masses with Children* (1973) and the Bishops' Conference guidelines *Liturgy of the Word with Children* (1996). The Eucharistic Prayers for Children authorised by Rome in 1973 should be used more widely. When there is a special children's Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass, this should

always be a true act of liturgy appropriate to the age group. There are plenty of occasions when it is good to include the children with the rest of the assembly for the whole Mass, but with care taken positively to involve the children. The Diocese will develop materials to help parishes with such celebrations.

- (4) There should be **reasonably regular Youth Masses** wherever the number of young people and resources allow. This may be in an individual parish, in a cluster of neighbouring parishes, or at deanery level. The musical resources of parishes and our high schools can be combined on such occasions. A Sunday Youth Mass is not a Mass only for young people, but one in which the focus for preaching, music and ministry is on the young members of the congregation. Please see Appendix 3 on pages 67-68 for some thoughts on Youth Masses.
- (5) A range of 'faith and fun' activities should be provided for the **pre-school and primary school children** of the parish according to their age, so that the parish becomes a 'second home' where they are nourished in the faith and enjoy being together as part of the family of the church.
- (6) **Regular youth activities** are strongly encouraged, again at different levels (parish, cluster, deanery and diocese) as numbers and resources allow. The diocese will organise a series of diocesan and area events each year: every parish is strongly encouraged to give full support and encouragement to these events.



**FAITH
FOOD &
FUN**

- (7) We currently have three Catholic Scout Groups in the diocese: the 12th Ipswich, 9th King's Lynn and 17th Norwich. Granted the difficulty in finding suitable leaders, the diocese supports and encourages the development of **Catholic Guiding and Scouting** where this is possible. This could begin with the youngest age-groups (Beavers & Rainbows) and then gradually development through Cub Scouts & Brownies to Scouts & Guides.
- (8) Special care needs to be taken to support parents in the ongoing catechesis of our **young people who do not attend Catholic schools**.

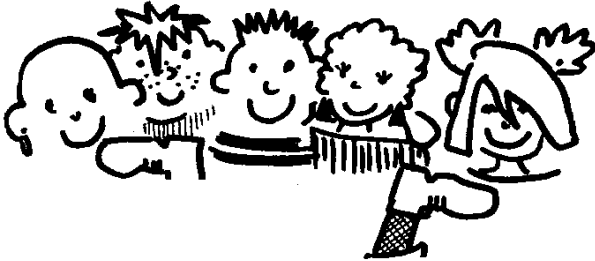
“We must listen to the young
and heed what they say”

(Newmarket parish)

- (9) **The Diocesan Youth Council** (for those aged 16-21) works closely with the Bishop and the Director of our Diocesan Youth Service to develop youth activities in the diocese. Parishes are asked to encourage young people to join the council.
- (10) **The Diocesan Youth Mission Team** (for those aged 18-29) is a group of young adults who give some of their free time to bring the Gospel message to other young people. They have begun to give missions in our secondary schools. When enough financial support is available, we hope to develop this team, giving an opportunity to young adults to spend part of a 'gap year' in such work.
- (11) **The Diocesan Youth Commission** works with our Director of Diocesan Youth Services to promote and support youth work across the diocese. It is composed of one clergy representative and one lay representative from each deanery.
- (12) Each deanery, and perhaps some larger parishes, are encouraged to consider the possibility of establishing **Deanery and Parish Youth Councils**, enabling young

people to have a voice in local church life.

- (13) There is great value in large **international and national gatherings** (e.g. World Youth Day, Taize, Lourdes) where young people can see that they are not alone in living their Catholic faith.



our Catholic schools

Absolutely essential to our diocesan programme for young people is the place of **our Catholic schools** and their partnership with parishes, deanery and diocese. Our Director of Schools Service and Diocesan Schools Service Commission seek to support and work closely with all our schools, as they are an integral part of the life of our diocesan family.

Our Catholic headteachers are key lay leaders in our diocese. All our teachers have a sacred vocation as stewards of God's nurturing care for the young.

The relationship between parish and primary school, and parish priest and headteacher, is particularly important, as is that between our high schools and all local clergy.

Foundation Governors play a vital role as representatives of the Bishop and the Diocese in working to ensure both the Catholic ethos and high academic standards of each of our schools.

Our Catholic schools serve the whole diocese, even when a parish does not have a school of its own. Past, present and future parishioners benefit from our schools, and every parish is touched and enriched in some way by the schools we have.

We must work to maximise the partnership between our schools and our parishes and diocese. Almost everything in this Diocesan Pastoral Plan applies to our school communities as much as it applies to our parish communities.

Welcoming & including single people

Because marriage and family life need so much support today, we can too easily neglect those many people who live a single life, whether by choice or by circumstance. This includes the bereaved, and single parents who bring up their children with such dedication despite the special challenges they face.

- (1) Single people of all kinds should be invited to suggest what might fruitfully be provided for them in parish life.
- (2) **Social events** should be organised in a way which enables single people to be involved with ease and comfort.
- (3) Special care should be given to those who have been **widowed**.
- (4) **Single parents** merit special care and support from the parish community.



Welcoming and including the separated and divorced

People who have suffered the pain of the breakdown of their marriages and family life often feel alienated from the Church, sometimes from a sense of 'failure' and sometimes because of a feeling of 'rejection' flowing from the Church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage. Any couple going through difficulties with their marriage and family life needs the prayer, care and practical support of the church community. People who have been through a civil divorce but have not entered a new relationship may need to be reminded that they may still receive Holy Communion. Our Catholic welcome must be more joyfully and pro-actively extended to people who are separated and divorced, as they are still very much members of our family.

- (1) Our parish 'welcome packs' and outreach material for less-active Catholics should include explicit mention of the separated and divorced.
- (2) The diocese, parishes and groupings of parishes (clusters and deaneries) will explore ways to give support and care to those experiencing difficulties and division in their married lives. Some

parishes find it helpful to establish a befriending service or support group.

- (3) **The Association of Separated and Divorced Catholics** has representatives in our diocese (names and numbers are in the Diocesan Year Book).



‘It is even more important that we should put ourselves out personally to get alongside people no matter what their colour, creed or problems, making them feel welcome and wanted’
(Gorleston parish)

The ring of the Prodigal Son

Catholic communities are sometimes reluctant to be totally all-embracing in their welcome and inclusivity. As just one example, while the Church has clear teaching on sexuality, we also insist that homosexual people be welcomed and ‘accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2358*).

We rightly maintain the enduring character of Catholic moral teaching, and it can be all too easy to reject a person or group of people along with rejecting certain behaviour. For example, we continue to insist on the absolute sacredness of human life from conception, and we reject abortion, but we must always show the welcoming love of the Lord to the woman who has suffered the trauma of abortion, and do all we can to bring her to healing and wholeness. We must speak the truth, but always in love (cf. Ephesians 4.15).

There are many Catholics who know their way of life is in conflict with Catholic teaching. This is true for many of our young people. Some strongly oppose that teaching. Others know in their hearts that the teaching is correct, but feel unable to live by it. Some struggle courageously to live Catholic teaching, failing at times as we all do. Most do not expect to come into our parish life and find acceptance of their attitudes or conduct, but they do have a right to find there the compassionate embrace of the Lord who scandalised his contemporaries by welcoming sinners and eating with them (Mark 2.15-17). Each of us is among those sinners welcomed by the Lord.

The Pharisees complained when Jesus went into a sinner’s house; today’s Pharisees will say the same of us if we are truly Christ-like in

our welcome (Luke 19.1-10). We need to make visible in our society the Lord who refused to join in the condemning looks of the crowd who brought to him the woman caught in the act of committing adultery, but who then looked up at her and said, ‘Go away, and do not sin any more’ (John 8.1-11).

Like the Prodigal Son, the returning sinner should find in our parish communities the welcoming embrace of the living God who put the best robe on his son, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet, and organised a celebration with the fattened calf (Luke 15.22-24). That is the welcome everyone should receive in our church life, whether saint or sinner, regular worshipper or newcomer, young or old.



A COMMUNITY OF MISSION

It is essential that we become truly welcoming communities, open to all and united in faith and in love. But if our only concern is the creation of close-knit worshipping communities, we will never be fully the Church of Jesus Christ. The Risen Lord calls us together, and binds us together, so that we can go forth together. As Pope Paul VI reminded us so powerfully, “Evangelising is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14). The word ‘evangelise’ comes from the Greek works for ‘good news’. The Church is called to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. That is true for our diocese, and it is also true for every parish. The call to proclaim the Gospel to the world, to be a radiant witness to everyone of Christ himself, is the heart of what it means to be a parish.

Our diocese as a whole, and each and every parish, should seek to become a beacon community – or a modern day ‘burning bush’ to which others are drawn and where they encounter the presence and call of the Living God.

“Outreach and bringing the Gospel to people in many different ways, in particular by ‘living it’, is so very important”
(Gorleston parish)

Why did we call our diocesan process “Forward and Outward Together”? Because going forward together is not enough. Our deepest identity as the Church of Christ is about going ‘outward’ together as well as ‘forward’, reaching out with the Gospel to everyone around us. The Feast of Pentecost reminds us powerfully that Christian communities of any kind can never be content simply with being ‘holy huddles’, no matter how united in love and faith they may be. We are sent forth with the power of the Holy Spirit to be evangelising communities, and any renewal of our parish and deanery structures must always have that as our first priority. The Risen Jesus has given every parish its ‘mission statement’: ‘As the Father sent me, so am I sending you’ (John 20.21); ‘You are to be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1.8). We are to be Apostle communities, fired with the Spirit of Pentecost.

Pentecost is the key. That is why we focused so much on the Sacrament of Confirmation during 2003 and 2004. Our diocesan renewal of Confirmation at Pentecost 2004 reminded us of our calling as baptised and confirmed Catholics. It is tempting to stay put together in our cosy Upper Rooms, but the Holy Spirit drives us out into the market-place to announce the Good News that Jesus is risen from the dead, and that he is with us.

Like the Good Shepherd, and in his name, we must go out in search of the lost sheep rather than simply remaining at home with the rest of the flock.

The call to ‘evangelisation’ is vital not only for those already within the Church, but also for that majority of people in our cities, towns and villages whose lives remain largely untouched by the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The radiant witness of our personal and parish lives is vital to this, but we also need to reach out to others, taking the light into the darkness. As Catholics, on our own but also united with other Christians, we must develop an effective and fruitful ‘ministry of outreach’. We are called together to be ‘the living Gospel for all to hear.’ It is not enough to ‘witness’ to our faith in Jesus Christ; we must also ‘share’ that faith with others, spreading the Good News in an explicit way.

Loving God,
you called us each by name
and gave your only Son to redeem us.
In your faithfulness you sent the Holy Spirit
to complete the mission of Jesus among us.

Open our hearts to Jesus.
Give us the courage to speak his name
to those who are close to us
and the generosity to share his love
with those who are far away.
We pray that every person throughout the world
be invited to know and love Jesus
as Saviour and Redeemer.
May they come to know his all-surpassing love.
May that love transform
every element in our society.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Prayer for ‘Disciples in Mission’

A beacon of holiness & welcoming love

Many parish responses highlighted the idea that we will most powerfully proclaim the Gospel by the radiant witness of our lives as individuals, families and parish communities.

Everything we have said so far about becoming welcoming communities lies at the heart of becoming truly ‘evangelising’ communities. But we cannot leave it at that! Like the Apostles, we are called to go out to others rather than just wait for them to come to us. We need to explore effective ways to do that in our society, each of us with our particular gifts and personalities. We are called to be Gospel-bearers in our families and to our friends, at work and at play, in school and college. We do that by the things we say and do, by the way we live, by the inspiration of our lives.

“Certainly our families, parishes, associations, schools, hospitals, charitable works and institutions give powerful witness to the faith. But do they share it? Does their living faith lead to conversion of minds and hearts to Jesus Christ? Does the fire of the Holy Spirit blaze in them?”
(*Go & Make Disciples*, U.S. Bishops, 1993)

It is not so much a message that we are asked to bring to others, but rather Christ himself. Like Mary, we are to be Christ-bearers, bringing the mysterious presence of the Lord into the lives of those we meet. Our own deeply personal relationship with Christ – our personal holiness – is absolutely essential for this mission we all share.

The Gospel story of the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth is a powerful image of our own vocation as Christ's Church. By going out to visit her cousin, Mary brought to Elizabeth and to the unborn John the Baptist the hidden presence of Jesus himself. When we go out to others in Christ's name, we bear to them the mysterious presence of Christ himself.

- (1) Parish life and liturgy must help to nurture and nourish each member of the parish family to be a Gospel-bringer and Christ-bearer to others.
- (2) **Together as a parish community, we need to find ways to be more publicly and openly the 'living Gospel for all to hear.'** A Catholic parish should never be a hidden community, shut away in its 'upper room'. The Holy Spirit calls us out into the market-place to proclaim the Risen Lord.
- (3) **Full use should be made of modern communications and media** (see later).
- (4) As a diocese and in our parishes, we should explore the possibility of training **lay evangelists**.
- (5) It is very important that we do not limit our ideas of lay involvement and leadership to church activities. **Lay people are called to go into the world with the presence and message of Christ: in school and college, at work and recreation.**
- (6) **More Catholics should become involved in public life**, including local government, the justice community (magistrates, police, etc), various agencies, and the media. It is essential that the Catholic community contributes fully to society as a visible Christian presence in East Anglia. It is here, especially, that Catholics can bring the influence of Catholic social teaching, and our Catholic emphasis on the sacredness of human life from womb to tomb (see, for example, *Cherishing Life* published in 2004 by the Bishops of England and Wales).
- (7) We need to explore and make best use of the various **resources** already available for encouraging

Catholics better to understand and share their faith with others (e.g. the CaFE programme, Echoes). The Diocesan Commission for Evangelisation will organise training days.



‘A more caring and loving Church
is the greatest evangelisation’
(*Sheringham parish*)

A beacon of care and loving-kindness

In the earliest days of Christianity, pagans were drawn to Christ by the practical care shown by the Church to those in need, especially those often marginalized and rejected by society: orphans, widows and slaves. Although it can at first seem idealistic and impractical in our society, we have much to learn from the earliest community. The fundamental principle surely applies to many aspects of our church life together, both in our care for those in need and in our increasing collaboration among parishes with fewer priests: in that first community, we are told, there was no-one in need because everything was shared among them (Acts 4.34, 32; cf. 2.44-45).

Every Christian community is called to serve the wider community. We can take our inspiration from the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.29-37), as well as Jesus' teaching that whatever we do for the least of his brothers and sisters, we do for him, and whatever we fail to do for them, we fail to do for Christ (Matthew 25.31-46). We are first and foremost called to holiness, but there is no holiness without love. We are called to a personal relationship with the Risen Lord, but it is in the 'least of his brothers and sisters' that we find and serve him.

“Come, you whom my Father has blessed, and take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me.”
(*Matthew 25.34-36*).

The Lord calls us to a love 'which is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active' (1 John 3.18; cf. James 2.14-17). It is a call to practical and effective service of the poor and needy, and anyone who is

marginalized, a call to follow the Lord's example as he washed the feet of his disciples (John 13.1-15). Every parish should be a 'foot washing' community, dedicated to humble service of the poorest of the poor.



It is diocesan policy that every parish community should be involved in some practical way in care for the poor and needy of their locality.

- (1) Every parish should discern with care and with prayer the greatest needs of the local community. It should be active in its commitment to the poor and needy – both locally and overseas. Such action can often be done in unity with other Christians, people of other faiths, and with secular agencies. Existing groups such as the SVP should be encouraged. New caring groups such as 'Helping Hands' in Wymondham can be developed. It is up to each parish to discern the greatest needs and the best action, but every parish should have some practical programme for helping those in need. Many parishes have a 'Care Group' of some kind which coordinates practical work for those in need in the local community.
- (2) Every parish will include **care for and visiting the sick** as a central part of their life. This is a ministry in which lay people can be increasingly involved. Visiting teams can be formed and trained, perhaps alongside the link people in any 'neighbourhood communities' which are formed.
- (3) Parishes also need to develop ministries of support to the **bereaved**. This requires careful training and formation.

- (4) **Prison and hospital visiting** is a special but essential ministry in which many can be involved, again with careful preparation and formation.
- (5) The Catholic Church must be visible in its practical care for the **homeless**, ideally in partnership with other Christians. The 'Open Door' project in Great Yarmouth is an inspiration to all, and would value financial support from other parishes. There may be room for similar projects in other parts of the diocese. Some already exist.
- (6) **The Diocesan Commission for Social Concern** represents caring organisations in the diocese, and administers the **St Edmund's Fund** which supports many welfare projects and activities to relieve poverty and distress.

- (7) The diocese will work closely with the Bishops' Conference body **Caritas-social action**.

Website:

www.caritas-socialaction.org.uk

'HELPING HANDS'

The 'Helping Hands' project in Wymondham began when a district nurse saw that many people who had been sick were neglected as soon as their medical condition was alleviated. The remit was broadened to include anyone in need, but especially those who had been ill or coming out of hospital, and also the lonely and housebound. The parish was divided into areas, with coordinators responsible for each area and volunteers allotted to coordinators. Each volunteer has identification and authorisation from the parish. Funds have been raised in the parish. Those involved were commissioned at Mass. Volunteers began by taking flowers and a card to those who had just come out of hospital or who were sick at home. Others now visit the lonely and housebound, take people with disabilities shopping, cut lawns, etc. This is a simple but practical scheme which brings the active love and care of the parish community to many in need.



A beacon of justice

When he came to England in 1982, Pope John Paul appealed to the young people he confirmed at Coventry to be 'devoted to the work of justice, which will bring peace on earth.' The Scriptures, and the challenging and often radical social teaching of the Catholic Church, make it clear that working for justice is something central to living and proclaiming the Gospel message of the coming of God's Kingdom.

Our **Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission** brings together those people in the diocese committed to justice issues, and works to encourage greater involvement by the whole diocese and its parishes in work for justice and peace.

Our Permanent Deacons have a particular part to play in the furthering of work for justice and peace in our diocese, as a key dimension of the 'ministry of charity' which has a priority in their call to serve.

It is diocesan policy that every parish should be actively involved in some way in work for justice and peace. This could be co-ordinated by a group (e.g. Justice & Peace Group, Human rights Group), but the whole parish should be involved as fully as possible. The diocese strongly recommends parish involvement in the following bodies:

(1) Life



The Catholic Church is committed to promoting the sacredness of human life 'from womb to tomb', from conception to death. Every parish should give its full support in a practical and effective way to the protection of unborn children, as well as the defence of the dignity of human life in every other way. We should also be openly and publicly committed to the support of mothers who decide not to have an abortion, and to compassionate care of women who have been through an abortion. In the Diocese of East Anglia, our primary focus is to support the work of the national charity 'Life' and its centres (listed in the Diocesan Year Book). All parishes are strongly encouraged to support these local centres. Beginning in 2005, there will be an

annual national mandatory collection to support pro-life charities on the July 'Day for Life'. However strongly we rightly speak out on pro-life issues, we should always 'speak the truth in love' and with the compassion of the Lord.
Website: www.lifeuk.org

(2) CAFOD

CAFOD is the primary agency of the Catholic Church in our country for support and solidarity with people in need across the world. Parishes should be involved not only in the twice-yearly Family Fast Day but also in CAFOD's campaigning activities and projects.

Website: www.cafod.org.uk

(3) Traidcraft

Every parish is encouraged to use fairly-traded goods (e.g. tea and coffee) and to sell such goods (e.g. by establishing a regular Traidcraft stall after Sunday Mass, etc). We will work towards being recognised as a Fair Trade Diocese.

Website: www.traidcraft.co.uk

(4) Aid to the Church in Need

Aid to the Church in Need provides spiritual and material aid wherever the Church is persecuted, oppressed or in need.

Website: www.acnuk.org

(5) Amnesty International

Although all will not agree with everything this organisation does, a parish can be regularly involved in a practical and effective way in work for human rights through Amnesty International, inviting parishioners to sign petitions or write letters on behalf of prisoners of conscience. The names of prisoners could be included in the Intercessions at Mass.

Website: www.amnesty.org.uk

(6) Asylum seekers & refugees

The Holy Father has called the plight of all uprooted people across the world 'a shameful wound of our time.' As part of our calling to 'welcome the stranger', parishes should embrace those who have fled their homes, and

welcome asylum seekers and refugees, as well as playing their part in insisting on fair and just conditions and procedures for all of them. Please keep in your prayers all those resident at the Oakington Immigration Centre in our diocese.

(7) Jubilee Campaign & Jubilee Action

Jubilee Campaign has campaigned since 1987 on behalf of people suffering as a result of injustice. Its sister charity, Jubilee Action, provides practical support to those who suffer unjustly. Both have the support of David Alton. Contact Jubilee Campaign, Cranleigh Road, Wonersh, Surrey GU5 0QX.
Website: www.jubileecampaign.co.uk

(8) Environmental issues

The Book of Genesis teaches us that we are the stewards of God's creation, accountable to him for the good use of his many gifts. We are responsible for the preservation and protection of our planet and its resources. Parishes should take account of environmental concerns in managing their own resources (e.g. recycling, use of electricity) and help to educate the whole parish community on such matters.

**(9) 'Building Bridges':
Cambodia & Holy Land**

The Diocese of East Anglia is now 'twinned' with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem and with the Diocese of Battambang in Cambodia. Deaneries and parishes are encouraged to become involved in these links, by fund-raising for diocesan projects in both places but also by establishing more local 'twinings' with communities in the Holy Land and Cambodia. Pilgrimages to the Holy Land are encouraged, and young adults are invited to pay visits to both Cambodia and the Holy Land in order to experience Catholic life there and to contribute their own gifts and talents. This outward-looking communion with the Catholic Church in the Holy Land and Cambodia is to be an important part of our diocesan identity.

(10) Parish Projects

Parishes are encouraged to continue and develop the overseas projects they have already established. The 'Building Bridges' twinings are not intended to undermine or replace such projects.



Communication: a beacon of light for all

Good communication is essential at every level of the church. Effective and attractive publicity is important. The diocese now has a bi-monthly newspaper, and is currently working towards a new website.

(1) Every parish is to appoint a Parish Communications Officer.
He or she will be responsible for pro-active contact with local media (especially local newspapers) in order to achieve coverage for 'good news' parish events.

(2) The Diocesan Communications Officer will organise **training** sessions for parish communications officers, including basic skills such as how to prepare a press release and be interviewed for local radio.

(3) We will also seek to develop more **pro-active relationships with local radio and television.**

(4) Many parishes have found it useful to develop their own **websites.** This is a further way of enabling the housebound to keep in touch with parish life.

(5) Parishes may find it fruitful to make use of the 'What's On?' and church sections of local newspapers, and to target notices of Mass times on hotels, guest houses, caravan parks, etc,



Earthen Vessels

We are called to bear to others the treasure of Christ himself and his saving presence. St Paul’s words apply to all of us in our mission from God:

‘It is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. It is the same God that said, ‘Let there be light shining out of the darkness’, who has shone in our minds to radiate the light of the knowledge of God’s glory, the glory on the face of Christ. We are only the earthenware jars that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us’ (2 Corinthians 4.5-7).

A tremendous amount has been asked of parishes so far in this document. At first, this could seem daunting, overburdening and draining, but we are always faced as Christians – alone and together – with the tension between idealism and realism, between the vision and the practical. We must never allow our limitations and weaknesses to impoverish the fullness of the ‘Good News’ that Jesus Christ places in our hands, but that Gospel should never become a heavy burden rather than a gift to be shared.

Faced with such an awesome vocation from God, we can feel deeply inadequate, but if we allow the Risen Christ to take our mere ‘five loaves and two fish’ he will take what we offer, bless it, and do great things through us in East Anglia.



The all ate and had enough (Lk.9.17)

God can never be tied down to plans of any kind, no matter how detailed. He will always have surprises in store for us. In him we place our trust.



**TOGETHER
IN TRUST AND PARTNERSHIP**

A central theme which emerged throughout the discussions on ‘Forward & Outward Together’ was the need for trust.

- **Trust in our Lord**, who is always with us, whatever our difficulties. He says to our diocese, to our parishes and smaller communities, to our families and to each of us: ‘Do not be afraid; I am with you’. There may be times when we seem like the apostles in their boat on the stormy waters, with the ‘waves’ of the problems and challenges which we face breaking into our boat and threatening to swamp it. But the Lord is with us, and we have no need to fear (cf. Mark 4.35-41).
- **Trust in each other:** bishop, priests and deacons in the diocese; priests and people in each parish. Many parish responses included a plea to parish priests to grant the gift of trust to lay people, and to be ready to ‘entrust’ to them certain parts of their work for which they remain ultimately responsible as parish priest but which are not part of their specific priestly ministry. There can be no fruitful collaboration and working in partnership without the gift of mutual trust and openness. Such trust is both a gift and a task. We may begin by taking the risk of trust, but that trust still needs to be earned and confirmed day by day.

‘There is a need for trust for all those bringing about the development – for us to trust the bishop, the people to trust us and for us to trust the people’
(Clergy of Peterborough deanery)

‘Working together in partnership’ is essential to our way forward together, at every level of our life in the Diocese of East Anglia.



Parishes working together

How is the universal Catholic Church structured? The whole people of God is divided into dioceses, each entrusted to the pastoral leadership and care of a bishop. The diocese is then ‘divided into distinct parts or parishes’ (Code of Canon Law, 374.1). Each

parish is by nature an integral part of the diocese.

No parish family, therefore, is an isolated self-sufficient unit. Our very catholicity demands an openness to one another, and a sharing of life and mission. There is no room for narrow parochialism in the Catholic Church. Every parish is an integral part, a living cell, of the diocesan family, and every parish must be open in faith and love to all the other parishes, especially neighbouring ones. The universal Church is a 'communion' of dioceses; our diocese is a 'communion' of parishes; each parish is a 'communion' of small local communities, families and individuals.

There are various ways of enabling cooperation and mutual support among parishes.



The Deanery

What is a deanery? 'To foster pastoral care by means of common action, several neighbouring parishes can be joined together in special groupings, such as deaneries' (*Code of Canon Law*, 374.2). Each deanery is led by a Dean appointed by the bishop to act in his name. In a scattered diocese such as ours, with many small parishes, working together in deaneries can be very fruitful, not only for the mutual support and care of the clergy, but also for pastoral and spiritual collaboration at local level.

In each deanery, there are regular meetings of the clergy, priests and deacons, both diocesan and religious, of that grouping of parishes. All are expected to attend meetings and participate as fully as possible in deanery life.

It is clear from many parish reports that there is little understanding among lay people of the meaning or value of deaneries.

The current urban deaneries (e.g. Ipswich & Peterborough) work better than rural ones. This is because urban deaneries are more compact, with parishes closer together. There needs to be flexibility across the diocese in the way we structure cooperation between parishes, and especially lay participation. In urban areas, the deanery will remain a valuable forum for lay people meeting and working together. In other areas, it may be better to focus on 'sub-deaneries' (clearly distinct areas of a deanery) or clusters of parishes. The best way forward needs to be

decided locally. The deanery will remain a key structure for local coordination of both ordained and lay ministry (e.g. catechetics and youth work), led by the local Dean.

- (1) **The deanery remains a key structure for strengthening the cooperation and 'communion' of local clergy and lay ministers.**
- (2) **There will continue to be deanery representatives on key diocesan commissions** (e.g. Youth, Evangelisation, Ecumenism, Marriage & Family Life).
- (3) **Each deanery is to have a Deanery Coordinating Catechist** whose role is to support parish catechists and to contribute to the development of catechesis and adult formation in the diocese as a member of the Commission for Evangelisation.
- (4) Each deanery is to have both a clergy and a lay representative on the **Diocesan Youth Commission**. Their role is to help develop local youth work, and pro-actively to encourage and support parish involvement in diocesan youth events and activities.
- (5) Each deanery is to have a clergy and a lay representative on the **Diocesan Ecumenical Commission**.
- (6) Each deanery is to have a lay representative on the renewed **Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life**.
- (7) There needs to be **flexibility** as to whether the deanery, 'sub-deanery' or parish cluster is the best setting for joint activities and events: e.g. adult formation and training, sacramental preparation (especially Confirmation & Marriage), youth work, sharing resources, days of recollection & retreats, social events.
- (8) The same flexibility is required in organising opportunities for **lay participation in discussion and decision-making at deanery level**. The Deanery Forum may work better in urban deaneries than rural ones. Elsewhere, such

gatherings might better take place at 'sub-deanery' or cluster level. It is essential, however, that there be formal structures for such lay involvement within each deanery.

- (9) **Deans are encouraged to 'exchange' with parish priests in their deaneries**, so that local parishes can get to know their Dean and the Dean gain a better sense of those parishes.
- (10) **Each deanery will organise an annual event with the presence of the Bishop**. This may replace the Lenten Station Mass, and be organised at a more suitable time during the year when more people might attend. Such an event could include one or more of a number of possibilities: e.g. Mass, talk, social event. Each deanery is left to liaise with the Bishop as to the most suitable event for the locality.

"It is clear that the majority of lay people struggle with the concept of the deanery, and are much more comfortable with the concept of smaller clusters working together... Clustering seems popular: people can identify with it. It really looks as though it would be better to focus on clusters for lay participation ...' (*King's Lynn deanery*)

"Sharing resources means sharing people. People are our main resource." (*St Mary's parish, Ipswich*)



The Cluster

Deanery and parish reports generally agree that there is great scope for the clustering of parishes and sharing of resources.

Even if we were sure of having enough priests in the future to keep our present parish structures, it would always be the case that some parishes do not have the personnel or resources on their own to provide all that is needed for a fully thriving parish life. These can range from simple photocopying facilities to organising Confirmation or Marriage Preparation programmes, the employment of a pastoral assistant, parish administrator or buildings supervisor, or running a retreat for Readers or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Many of these activities could be organised by 'clustering' neighbouring parishes and sharing resources; others may be more appropriate at deanery level.

In our diocese at this time, however, such 'clustering' is vital as a way to prepare for our future together. As our number of priests declines, parishes will need not only to work together ever more closely, but also eventually to be combined in some way.

We need to arrange most clusters in such a way that there is real potential for eventual combination into a single parish. Such clustering can be difficult in rural areas, and yet the combination of rural parishes may well become necessary over the coming decade.

Our future together is likely, therefore, to be a two-stage process. Firstly, the 'clustering' of distinct but neighbouring parishes, each with their own parish priest, but gradually working ever closer together, co-ordinating Mass times, and preparing for the time when they might be required to combine into a single parish. Secondly, the combination of two or more parishes into a single canonical parish with one parish priest, assisted when possible by other priests (newly-ordained, temporary visitors from overseas, retired, etc).

A fundamental principle is that there are to be no 'priest-less' parishes in our diocese. However we organise our diocese in the future, developing lay leadership of local Catholic communities and enhancing the role played by permanent deacons, every community will be entrusted to the servant leadership of a priest appointed by the bishop as 'canonical pastor'.

- (1) Within deaneries, or sometimes across deanery boundaries, two or more nearby parishes are to be 'clustered' to encourage the sharing of resources and to begin to prepare now for an imminent future with fewer priests.
- (2) Parishes in such 'clusters' are asked to examine how many Masses are really needed each weekend, and if possible to stagger Mass times so that neighbouring priests can 'supply' for each other when needed.
- (3) Parish priests of clustered parishes could consider occasional 'parish swaps' on Sundays, allowing neighbouring parishes to get to know the other priests in the cluster, and providing an opportunity for variety of preaching, etc.

- (4) If and when necessary, such ‘clusters’ will be the foundation of a new form of parish, with three current parishes served by two priests, or two served by one. Such clusters probably work best between similar kinds of parish (e.g. ‘rural’, ‘urban’, etc). There may be opportunities for communal living when appropriate and desired. Further consideration needs to be given to the possibility of a team of priests living together and serving a city or area.

The agreed ‘clusters’ are presented in Part Two of this plan (see page 63). Such ‘working and planning together’ should begin immediately and develop over time. Some such clusters will need to become combined parishes quicker than others.

Progress in clustering will be monitored locally by the Deans who will report regularly to the Bishop through the College of Consultors. The Bishop will ask for a full report on progress when conducting his visitation of a parish.



Communities within each parish

Every parish is a community of communities, whether villages or areas of a town or city. Although such local Catholic communities may not have Mass each weekend, they should still be encouraged to develop their community life within the wider life of the parish. This could include a local forum of some kind, weekday House Masses, occasional Sunday Mass, Scripture and prayer groups, and social events, giving much scope for developing forms of lay leadership.

‘In the villages, what is needed is a way forward in which the parish can develop and provide for people’s needs without the requirement for Sunday Mass there. A working structure in a parish is to build clusters of local communities, self-supporting and vibrant, with the parish church at their centre and as their focus. Such clusters should become a living presence of a lively Christian community, organising prayer groups, ecumenical events, providing support for those with needs at home, providing Christian education to all age groups, and communicating with others, both directly and through the parish centre.’
(St Philip Howard parish, Cambridge)



Working together in the parish

The sacraments lie at the heart of our Catholic life, and these include the Sacrament of Holy Orders by which people are consecrated as Bishops, Priests and Deacons for the service of the Church. However few priests we may have over the coming decades, our priests will remain central and essential to our Catholic communities. Nothing said in this Pastoral Plan about the role of lay people should be seen as undermining the pivotal role of the priest, and especially the parish priest, in the life of every parish. Sharing the ministry of the bishop, the priest is a sacramental image of Christ the Good Shepherd. No-one can replace him in that role. Furthermore, the law of the Church gives the parish priest an ultimate responsibility for all aspects of parish life (including finance and administration, as well as liturgy, catechesis, pastoral care, etc) for which he is answerable to the Bishop and the Diocesan Trustees.

The priest does not lead and serve in isolation, however, but rather in collaboration and partnership with the whole parish community.

“The image of the parish priest as one who “does everything himself” and who is “the king of the parish” must give way to an alternative model of the parish priest “who works with...” despite difficulties and obstacles”
(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, pp.100-1)

“The believing community is the natural place for the life of the priest. It justifies his existence when he lives his identity, vocation and mission in its midst. His life is life within the community, with the community and for the community; and his greatest joy is the accompaniment of the Christian community, patiently, gently and persistently, so that it responds to its vocation and mission. This obliges the priest to reside always and truly in his parish, in order to build it up and make it a community of charity and participation”
(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p.101)

The primary reason for encouraging and enabling the development in our diocese of greater lay participation is not in order to ‘fill in’ for priests as they become more stretched, but because of the dignity and responsibility which flows from Baptism and Confirmation.

“The Church is not “you” and “us” and “them”, but rather all of us together, each one according to their place and vocation.”
(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p.110)

Parish and deanery reports suggest there is an enthusiasm and a generous readiness among lay people in almost all parishes to take on many tasks of administration and other forms of leadership so that the priest can focus even more fruitfully on his role as pastor and spiritual leader. Although the parish priest is entrusted by the Bishop with an overall responsibility for the whole life of his parish, which he cannot hand over to others, there is tremendous room for developing the partnership of priest and people in every parish, with lay people being entrusted with the day-to-day administration of much of parish life as well as leadership of local communities within the parish (villages, neighbourhoods, etc), leading Scripture-reflection and prayer groups, catechesis, sacramental preparation, adult education, youth work, sharing chaplaincy work in schools, hospitals, prisons, universities and colleges, social events, welfare work, parish visiting, and ongoing care for the sick, the housebound, and the bereaved. A key role of priests and deacons is to discern the giftedness of lay people and to encourage them to use those gifts, always sensitive to their other responsibilities.

Encouraging lay people to take on such tasks is not simply a matter of helping fewer priests to focus on their vital tasks; it is far more about enabling lay people – women and men - to live more fully their call to active and responsible participation in the life of our Church at every level and in the Church's mission to the world.

It is essential that the full dignity and equality of **women** be recognised in our diocese, and we hope that lay women will play an ever more fruitful role at the heart of our parish and diocesan life. The development of lay leadership and other ministries (at cluster, deanery and diocesan level, as well as in the parish) should provide opportunities for greater use of so many unused skills and resources, especially the often untapped intellectual and leadership skills of women in the Church.

Lay women are already generally far more involved than lay men in ministry and service in the Church. We also need to ensure that lay **men** of all ages are encouraged and welcomed into forms of leadership and involvement.

It is hoped that the 'Structures for Lay Participation' established on pages 36-37 will

provide opportunities for lay women and men to be involved more effectively in decision-making in the parish, cluster, deanery and diocese.

It is all too easy, however, as we seek to involve lay people more in parish life, to put increasing pressures on people who are already busy and burdened, and whose calling may be to live and share the Gospel precisely in their home and workplace rather than by taking on yet more parish activities. Sometimes the best way to enable people to live their true Christian vocation is by reducing rather than increasing the number of 'churchy' duties they so generously take on. The joyful privilege of belonging to God's family involves duty and responsibility, but it should not drain people of their little remaining energy as they struggle to earn a living, bring up a family and cope with the strains and stresses of our world. Many people simply do not have the time to give more of themselves to their local parish, deanery or diocese, and they should not be asked or expected to do so. There are some people who give much of their limited time to the Church who perhaps should be giving some or all of that time to their families as part of their sacred vocation as spouse and parent. It is in their ordinary daily lives, nourished each Sunday at Mass by the Word of God and the Bread of Life, that they live and share their Catholic faith.



Needs and Skills Audits

Every member of our church communities has God-given gifts and talents for the service of Christ in his Church and the world. Each is a vital member of the Body of Christ. No-one plays the role of the 'appendix' in that Body! Everyone is needed (see St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, ch. 12, verses 4-30).

Before anyone is invited to offer their gifts and talents, each parish community must first explore what forms of ministry and service are most needed for the development of its life, liturgy and mission. What are the gaps in the parish, especially in the light of your local discussions on 'Forward & Outward Together' and this Diocesan Pastoral Plan? **A 'Needs Audit' should precede any 'Skills Audit'.**

Once the needs have been identified, simple but clear 'job descriptions' could usefully be drawn up so that those offering themselves – and the church community they are to serve – know what to expect.

Our church communities are full of gifts and talents, and they need to be revealed, discovered and used where possible, always with sensitivity to the limits of people's time and energy. Once generously offered, every effort should be made to follow up and use those skills.

A 'skills audit' of some kind, perhaps linked with a general census, may be the best way of discovering what people have to offer and inviting them to become more involved in the life of the church. Such a questionnaire might well include a general question such as "What specialist skills do you have which you would be prepared to put at the service of the Church?", as well as a 'tick list' of forms of service in which they might be interested, based on the 'Needs Audit' previously carried out. People should be asked to indicate a willingness to train when appropriate for any ministry or service. Not all forms of service require training. Some people will already have the skills and expertise required for those that do.

- (1) We should not always wait for people to volunteer. There are times when it is best pro-actively to **invite people** to offer their time and talents for a particular service.
- (2) **An annual 'Parish Opportunities Fair'**, with stalls advertising various opportunities for service in a parish, can be a fruitful and fun way of encouraging people to sign up for ministries and service. It could be organised on the lines of the beginning-of-year 'Freshers Fairs' at universities, perhaps combined with a parish fete or social activity.



Greater lay involvement & lay leadership

Lay people need responsibility, opportunity and encouragement. For some, this means deeper involvement and participation in the life of the life, liturgy and mission of the local church community. For others, it will mean sharing in leadership.

Several deaneries and parishes suggested greater use of lay pastoral assistants, coordinators and administrators, but no consensus on this has yet emerged. For some parishes, the possible funding

implications are a disincentive, although it should be noted that Brentwood Diocese operates a widespread system of voluntary pastoral assistants with an established training two-year programme.

Once again, flexibility is required. The parishes in our diocese are often very different to each other with regard to the size and average age of the congregation, financial resources and general needs. Some parishes are already well-served by a team of volunteers. A few already have full-time or part-time lay people supporting the life of the parish, including pastoral assistants, parish secretaries, site managers, administrators. One thing is certain, however. In every parish, lay people should increasingly be entrusted with many if not most of the administrative tasks, as well as participating more fully in pastoral care and outreach. In developing job descriptions for those who take on such roles, it is important to distinguish pastoral ministries of evangelisation, catechesis, care, etc from roles of administration. Both are important to any parish; some may well be combined in one person with multiple responsibilities; but they are different roles requiring different skills and different training.

It is diocesan policy that we develop different forms of lay leadership in every parish and across the diocese.

Besides the possible use of full or part-time pastoral assistants, administrators, etc, this should include the leadership and coordination of:

- (1) smaller communities within parishes (villages, neighbourhood groups, etc),
- (2) adult formation and catechetical programmes including sacramental preparation
- (3) evangelising teams
- (4) youth work
- (5) pastoral care of the sick, housebound, bereaved, etc

Some concern was expressed in parish reports that such lay leaders should not take over the distinctive role of the priest. This concern is echoed in *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, but any true working in partnership in the Catholic Church will always

involve ordained ministers and lay people exercising their distinctive roles, in full harmony and with full respect for each other.

Such involvement by lay people should be as wide as possible in each parish, rather than focused on a handful of key people. 'Working together' is as vital for lay leaders among themselves as it is for priests among themselves and with deacons and lay people.

There are parishes where a few people seem to do everything. On the one hand, their generous dedication should be welcomed with gratitude: most parishes need such people. On the other hand, those few are in an important position to draw others into deeper involvement in the parish community. The more people who are actively involved at the heart of parish life, the happier the parish community will be. The service of the 'faithful few' will only change if everyone is made to feel they are a vital part of the life and work of the church, with their own gifts and talents to offer.

"Lay leadership supported by good training should be key to the overall development of the diocese" (*individual response*)

"Lay leadership is crucial and must be taken seriously" (*Costessey parish*)

Formation and training for ministry and service

Prudent selection and careful formation is very important for both lay and ordained ministry.

For some of these services, professional training will be needed. Some parish and deanery responses suggested, for certain forms of leadership and ministry, a formal diocesan programme of training, validation and commissioning.

Because of the nature of our diocese, and the flexibility needed, it may not be easy to develop a simple diocesan programme for formation and training for such lay people taking on key positions of responsibility. We will need to develop a flexible programme which can be of support to people in very different situations.

There clearly needs to be further discussion before we embark on a diocesan programme of any kind. We must identify the areas of need, and develop a programme which is as flexible and user-friendly as possible.

- (1) Between September 2004 and July 2005, **further parish, cluster, deanery and diocesan discussion** is required to clarify our training needs and what can most usefully be contributed by a diocesan programme.
- (2) Most reports suggest a **diocesan programme delivered locally**, either at county, deanery or cluster level. Appropriate funding must be found.
- (3) There seems to be general agreement that such a programme should be **flexible**, modular, and incorporate distance-learning and on-line methodologies. Twice-termly Saturday sessions and/or 'Summer Schools' were also suggested. It is difficult for busy people to spare time for in-depth training: any programme needs to be realistic about people's ability to commit themselves to regular meetings.
- (4) Any training must be appropriate and effective. Although there was no complete agreement on this, there appears to be a balance in favour of some form of **validation** and certification on completing all or part of the programme. In some cases, a diocesan commissioning would be appropriate.
- (5) The development of such a programme needs to take full account of the official Bishops Conference '**Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies**' (**CCRS**) which was designed in part to answer the needs expressed above and which is usually run on the lines proposed in point 3. The CCRS is currently under review, nationally and in the diocese. There should be no unnecessary duplication of programmes.
- (6) Where appropriate, any diocesan programme will be developed in liaison and **cooperation** with the Margaret Beaufort Institute, the Cambridge Theological Federation, etc.

- (7) If people are to give their time and talents to such special training and formation, we need to ensure that whenever possible they are **offered opportunities for service and not ignored.**
- (8) Those who give their time and talents need to be **thanked and encouraged.** Some parishes organise an annual Mass and social event for parish workers.

**‘Volunteers
are one of the Church’s most valued assets,
and as such should be cherished’**
(individual response)



Limited terms of service

We need to be very sensitive about placing undue pressures on lay people who are already busy, and especially those whose sacred vocation to marriage and family life may suffer from too much involvement in church affairs.

Nearly all deanery and parish responses agreed that a limited – though renewable – term of office should be adopted for all forms of lay ministry and service in the church. This would help to ensure that people do not feel ‘trapped’ in a role, and also that new people can be given opportunities for service. A limited term of office might encourage people to take on a responsibility without the fear of having to carry it on for life! On the other hand, it would be good if all were ready cheerfully to hand over ministries (e.g. Reader, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, Catechist) and other forms of service to others after a certain time, perhaps to take up other forms of service instead.

“A term of office is a very good idea. If people knew they would only have to do something for a number of years, they might be more confident about coming forward” *(King’s Lynn parish)*

Once again, flexibility is required, as it can be difficult in smaller parishes to find replacements. The expertise gained through formation, training and experience should not be automatically time-limited, but such gifts and talents can often be used in many different ways.



Adult religious formation

All responses highlighted the need for a programme of adult religious formation, in addition to any specific programmes for training for ministry and service. Some parishes and deaneries have already initiated local programmes of adult formation. A diocesan input seems to be welcome, but delivered locally in some way (three centres, one in each county; deanery; parish clusters; parish) rather than in one place in the diocese.

(1) **Every parish is to have a Parish Coordinating Catechist**, working with the Deanery Coordinating Catechist to ensure the best possible catechesis, adult formation, sacramental preparation, etc. Those who have already trained as ‘Key Catechists’ are obviously very well prepared to take on one or either of these key positions, as a resource for other catechists.

- (2) **The ongoing formation of catechists throughout the diocese is vital**, and a priority for the Commission for Evangelisation which includes all Deanery Coordinating catechists among its members.
- (3) **The place of the ‘Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies’ (CCRS) needs to be reviewed**, in the light of the Bishops Conference and the need for a diocesan programme for training for lay leadership and involvement.
- (4) The Commission for Evangelisation will organise **diocesan training days** on established programmes which may be of support to parishes (e.g. CaFE).
- (5) The diocese also encourages the development of more **informal faith-sharing and Scripture-study groups** in parishes and smaller communities. Special attention should be given to lectionary-based groups which gather to reflect on the following Sunday’s Scripture readings.

- (6) Deaneries, clusters and parishes are encouraged to make greater use of **days of recollection, retreats and missions.**
- (7) **Bishop Michael** will continue to offer teaching sessions.

Greater emphasis needs to be given to the **ongoing formation of parents** as the first teachers of their children in the faith. Parents are the key catechists of their families. Their children’s preparation for the sacraments of Baptism, First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation, as well as the celebration of those sacraments, are a prime opportunity for the deeper Christian formation of parents. Such preparation programmes should always include and involve the parents in some way, at least for special sessions on the meaning of each sacrament. The diocese and parishes must do more to promote and enrich the Christian home as the place where Christ is to be found and encountered, and the family as the ‘domestic church’, a holy place where prayer, Christian witness and teaching, and loving care are woven into the fabric of daily life. Parents’ responsibility for the Christian education of their children cannot be handed over to our Catholic schools or our parish communities: our homes, schools and parishes must work in ever closer partnership, but it is the vocation of parents to lead their children in the ways of holiness, above all by their example and witness, and by sharing their faith.



Working together with other Christians

All of this section so far has been about ‘working together’ within the Catholic community, but our common baptism calls us to work together as closely as possible with our fellow Christians and their communities at every level of the Church.

Ecumenism is not always easy, but it is not an optional extra for Catholics. It is not only as individual parish communities, clusters of parishes, deaneries or even as a diocesan family within the Roman Catholic Communion that we move forward and outward. It is with our fellow Christians, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

When church leaders meet, so often we find that we have the same challenges and problems. There is so much can be done together, above all in our public witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of East Anglia. It is united with other Christians that we can most effectively and fruitfully be ‘the living Gospel for all to hear.’

There are already very good and friendly relationships between the church leaders in East Anglia. Anglican and Catholic Bishops, and Methodist, United Reformed Church, Salvation Army and other church leaders, need to be seen together, praying together, teaching together, leading together, sometimes just being together. The same is true at local level.

Ecumenism is always a challenge, but especially so in East Anglia. Roman Catholics are a small minority in a part of the country which has not always been welcoming to us. Moreover, our geographically-large Catholic parishes often encompass a large number of Anglican and other communities, making good active relationships difficult to maintain. Catholic clergy cannot attend all fraternals and ecumenical meetings in their area, and this will become even more difficult as the number of clergy decreases. The involvement of well-catechised lay people will become increasingly important. Within these constraints, however, and always in accordance with Catholic principles (see the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism*, 1993) praying and working together with other Christians remains a priority:

- (1) Catholic communities should be as involved as possible in local **Christians Together or Churches Together**. If there are not already effective **clergy fraternals**, it would be good for Catholic priests to initiate and host such fraternals. As so often, it is the building of good personal relations which is often a vital step towards effective ecumenism. Joint social events with other churches can build good relations.
- (2) **Scripture-study groups and prayer groups** can often be organised on an ecumenical basis. **Joint services** are an established practice during Christian Unity Week, but there are surely other opportunities during the year to worship and witness together.

- (3) **Teaching** can often be done together (e.g. Bishop Michael and Bishop Graham’s teaching session on Baptism at St John’s Cathedral in Lent 2004; this ‘Two Cathedrals’ event is now to become an annual one). Several churches could get together to run a series of talks and discussions on as common topic, with plenty of opportunity for friendly airing of differences as well as agreement). The various ‘agreed statements’ between Christian Churches should be explored together.
- (4) Several Anglican and Methodist **churches** in our diocese already give a warm welcome to Catholics gathering for Mass at the weekend. When a Mass centre or church is too small for a congregation when we need to reduce the number of Masses, it may make sense to move to a welcoming larger Anglican or other church.
- (5) There are several **Local Ecumenical Partnerships** in the diocese, including special chaplaincies. Reference should be made to the newly-published set of leaflets from the Bishops Conference on LEPs.

The Catholic Church is fully committed to pursuing the path to full Christian Unity. As Pope John Paul wrote in his encyclical letter *Ut unum sint*, ‘At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture...’(4). Without in any way abandoning or undermining our distinctive Catholic teaching, ecumenism must be central to our Catholic life: ‘Thus it is absolutely clear that ecumenism, the movement promoting Christian unity, is not just some sort of “appendix” which is added to the Church’s traditional activity. Rather, ecumenism is an organic part of her life and work, and consequently must pervade all that she is and does...’ (*Ut unum sint*, 20).

In other words, we cannot be truly Catholic if we are not actively committed to working for the full unity of all Christians. At local level, we can pray and worship together, conscious of our unity in the Spirit of Christ. We can study together, learning to understand each other better and enriching each other in the process. We can work together to bring the Good News

of Jesus Christ to our communities, both in explicit evangelisation and in bringing God’s care, love and justice to the sick and the sad, the poor and hungry, the oppressed and afflicted. We can be friends together, enjoying each other’s company as fellow disciples and companions of the Risen Lord.



Working together with people of other faiths

There is a growing opportunity in East Anglia, especially in some places, to grow in friendship with people of other faiths. We should not simply live side-by-side in a quiet co-existence with Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, etc. There should be an active co-existence, reaching out to each other in mutual respect and working to build good relations. There will be occasions when we can learn about each other, meet together socially, and work together for the common good.

The large number of Muslims moving into Western Europe in general, and to parts of our diocese in particular, challenges us to explore the relationship between Christianity and Islam. This is something which will be increasingly important for all Christian communities in East Anglia, not least because very many Muslims are ready to live and proclaim their faith in a naturally open and public way which Catholics often find difficult. Perhaps our Muslim neighbours will inspire us to be more joyfully open about our Catholic faith.



“Parishioners who feel responsible for engaging in the work of their parishes are acutely aware of the need for priests to trust them more. The days of every single decision having to be personally sanctioned by ‘Father’ have to end if parishioners are to become responsible adults within the local church, rather than mere helpers to the priest in his responsibilities. Without this, people only see a diminishing Church and an exhausted clergy. This need for shared responsibility goes beyond the concept of ‘collaboration’, as there is real concern that, at least in places, there won’t be any priest to collaborate with if the present trend continues.”
 (St Mary’s parish, Ipswich)



Structures for Lay Participation

The church is a family, and as in any family, everyone should be as involved as possible in family life, each according to their particular place in the family. In Catholic teaching, bishops and priests – assisted by deacons – have a distinctive and irreplaceable role as making visible the Risen Christ as our shepherd and teacher. But the whole baptised community is the royal and priestly people of God, and our common dignity and equality is the setting for the role of ordained ministers. It is therefore essential that lay people be given every opportunity to play their full part in the life, liturgy and mission of the church in the diocese, deanery, cluster, parish and smaller communities, always in accordance with Catholic doctrine and Canon Law.

(1) **A Diocesan Council of Laity will be established, with one lay representative from each canonical parish.** Such a representative will usually be the lay chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council or its equivalent, or that person's delegate. The Council will meet twice a year with the Bishop to discuss, be consulted on and contribute to the planning of key aspects of the life and mission of the diocese.

(2) As and when such a gathering is judged necessary or useful by the Bishop, in liaison with the College of Consultors, this Council will hold a joint meeting of a representative group of priests, deacons and religious from the diocese. This will constitute any future **Diocesan Pastoral Council**.

(3) **Occasional diocesan meetings** will also be held of lay people involved in particular aspects of diocesan life (cf. those already held on youth work, justice and peace, people with disabilities, marriage and family life). Such specialist gatherings contribute another dimension to the process of diocesan consultation.

(4) **There will be a forum or fora for lay discussion and collaboration within every deanery.** This could be (a) one *forum* for the whole deanery (especially in urban deaneries); (b) separate *fora* for parts of a deanery (for example, in the Cambridge Deanery, where the Cambridge city parishes, Sawston and Ely might meet separately from the four parishes of Buckden, Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neot's); (c) separate *fora* in more rural deaneries for clusters of parishes, although still feeding into a single deanery report of some kind on issues for discussion.

(5) Whether or not cluster meetings are opted for above, all **clusters** of parishes are strongly encouraged to hold occasional inter-parish discussions so that lay people can contribute to the development of the clustering process.

‘There is a need for a forum in each parish at which people can express their views and put forward ideas, and feel that their suggestions are being given due consideration. There is also an occasional need for a more formal mechanism for consultation within the parish’
(OLEM parish, Cambridge)



(6) **It is diocesan policy that every parish have an established public forum of some kind to enable lay consultation and participation in parish pastoral life and planning.** Parishes are left to organise what kind of arrangement is most appropriate, although this should be decided at an open meeting of the parish rather than by the clergy alone.

The main options for such a *forum* are:

(a) **an established Parish Pastoral Council**, with a constitution and members elected and appointed as agreed.

(b) **an open Parish-in-Council** to which everyone is invited. This may require a Steering group to ensure that agreed recommendations are put into practice.

Any parish *forum* should meet at least twice a year, and be chaired by a lay person who will normally be the parish representative on the Diocesan Council of Laity.

- (7) It may be appropriate for **smaller communities within a parish**, especially those now or once centred on a place of worship (whether or not Sunday Mass is celebrated there), to have their own *forum* for supporting their local Catholic community life. Such a local community and its *forum* should be fully integrated into the wider life of the parish. It is always the main Parish Pastoral Council or Parish-in-Council which is to be seen as the primary *forum*. Local communities could well be represented formally on any Parish Pastoral Council, or take a full part in any Parish-in-Council.



TOGETHER IN PRAYER

Several reports highlighted the danger of becoming so caught up in structural and practical matters in the diocese and parishes that we fail to focus on the heart of the matter: our call to grow into an ever-deeper personal (but never private) relationship with our Lord as members of his Church, the family of God. Our prayer and worship are central to this spiritual growth and renewal. We are called to be people of prayer and people of worship. The story of Martha and Mary in St Luke's Gospel reminds us that we should not become so engrossed in 'activity' that we lose sight of our spiritual centre: we need Marthas in every church community, serving with zeal and enthusiasm, but it was Mary, sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to his word, who had chosen 'the better part' (Luke 10.42).

We could all learn much from words often seen in Catholic communities in Cambodia, rooted in the dominant Buddhist spirituality of the people there. For us, the Risen Christ alone can give us the peace the world cannot give, and it is above all in prayer that we receive his gift of peace.

The suffering of Cambodia has been deep.
 From this suffering comes Great Compassion.
 Great Compassion makes a Peaceful Heart.
 A Peaceful Heart makes a Peaceful Person.
 A Peaceful Person makes a Peaceful Family.
 A Peaceful Family makes a Peaceful Community.
 A Peaceful Community makes a Peaceful Nation.
 A Peaceful Nation makes a Peaceful World.
 May all beings live in Happiness and Peace.

Each of us needs to be a prayerful person, as a member of a prayerful family and a prayerful parish. Any deepening of our prayer life needs to happen in our families and homes, and in our parishes, but the diocese may be able to give support in different ways. No parish can move forward unless its life and work is rooted in prayer.

- (1) The disciples asked Jesus, 'Teach us to pray.' Every Catholic community in our diocese should be a **'school for prayer'**, helping us to pray on our own, with our friends, in our families and with fellow disciples of Jesus.
- (2) As and when appropriate, the diocese will provide **prayer cards and special liturgies** (e.g. those produced for Pentecost 2004).

- (3) **Times of prayer** should be part of nearly all sacramental programmes, children's and adult formation, talks, etc in a church setting.
- (4) The development of a range of **prayer groups** is encouraged, both within a Catholic setting and with other Christians. Opportunities should be provided to learn different ways of praying, and to try them out in a supportive environment. These groups should always lead members back to parish life and liturgy.
- (5) **A parish lending library** with carefully-selected books on prayer would be a help to many.
- (6) **A prayer intentions board or book** at the back of the church, regularly checked and referred to by the priests and people as a source of intentions, provides a further focus for prayer.
- (7) **Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours** (especially Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer) is encouraged in parishes, smaller communities, groups and families.
- (8) **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** is strongly encouraged in every parish. Silent adoration should be the main form of prayer, and adoration should always be arranged in such a way that it is seen to flow from the Celebration of Mass and leads us back to it. Every parish is asked to try to arrange at least one hour of public Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each week. Longer periods of Adoration may be possible with a rota of adorers. One great advantage of such adoration is that the church can be kept open during that time even in those places which are usually locked.
- (9) As already mentioned, **Scripture-reflection groups** are strongly encouraged, especially when the readings for the following Sunday are read and explored in a setting

of prayerful reflection. 'Welcoming the word of God' lies at the heart of our call to welcome the Eternal Word in person into our lives. As St Jerome said, 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.'

- (10) Several parishes already organise **days of reflection, times of quiet and retreats** for parishioners. Diocesan events for young people involving prayer and reflection are already being organised. There is much room for the development of such events at diocesan, deanery, cluster, parish and community level.
- (11) We should make full use of the **centres of prayer** which already exist in our diocese: the National Shrine at Walsingham, Clare Priory, Buckden Towers, Hengrave Hall and other places of pilgrimage. We should explore together as a diocese ways to make more fruitful use of the spiritual resources we already have.
- (12) **Pilgrimage** is an important part of our life of prayer. Annual diocesan pilgrimages already take place to Lourdes, Taize and Walsingham. Smaller pilgrimages are now developing to the Holy Land.
- (13) **Spiritual direction** should be encouraged for lay people. The diocese should build up a living resource of spiritual directors available for people across the diocese. Our religious communities may be in a special position to offer such a ministry. Lay people can also be trained for this service of accompanying others in their spiritual journey through life.

"Raising the profile of prayer and spirituality
for lay people seems to be key"
(individual response)

"The Mass is our greatest prayer"
(Kings Lynn parish)



LIVING THE SACRAMENTS

By our baptism and confirmation, we are together a priestly community, above all when we come together to celebrate the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Mass. The liturgy lies at the very centre of the life of our Catholic communities, and the renewal of our liturgy is central to the continual renewal which our diocese and parishes will always need. The liturgy is not a spectacle which we watch as though at a theatre; it is the worship of the whole community, gathered together as God's family, and we are called to take part **'knowingly, actively and fruitfully'** (Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, art. 11). The renewal of our liturgy should focus on those three words:

- (1) **"Knowingly"**: further education on the meaning of the liturgy should be central to any diocesan and parish programme of adult Christian formation.
- (2) **"Actively"**: we should work towards being as inclusive as possible regarding the liturgy. No-one should feel excluded, and all should feel welcome. Active participation is the norm for all. Every parish is encouraged to establish a Liturgy Committee to contribute to the overall development of liturgy.
- (3) **"Fruitfully"**: we can do more to celebrate the liturgy in a way that encourages and inspires people, and allows God's transforming love to be at work within the whole community and each individual. The liturgy is only fully fruitful if we grow in personal holiness, in love for each other, and in deeper involvement in the Church's mission to the world. Mass and mission, worship and witness belong inextricably together.

"The liturgy actualises salvation, making it real for every believer and every community of believers which celebrates it. In the liturgy, Christ, the one who is living, dying and rising from the dead, is present and active in the faithful. He fills them with divine life and makes them his people. The liturgy is the act of Christ gathering his Church, building it up, sanctifying it, revealing it and making it a sign and instrument for all humanity."
(*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, p. 41)

'People can be put off church by bad liturgy. Conversely, people are more likely to maintain regular Sunday attendance if their experience of the liturgy is a good one.'

(*Diocesan Liturgy Commission*)

TOUCHING THE HEART

Liturgy is an encounter with the living God in the midst of his family, the Church. It should be a deeply personal encounter, renewing and enriching our relationship with the Lord.

Catholic liturgy should touch the heart of each person present. The whole human being takes part in liturgy - body, mind, heart and soul - and there is a long and rich tradition in the Catholic Church of reaching the invisible inner person through the visible and tangible: through art and music, sight and sound, through touch, smell and taste (e.g. laying-on of hands, incense, etc).

Although we must never reduce the experience of God to our emotions, we should not ignore people's desire to 'feel' something of the peace, warmth and joy of God's presence in the liturgy. The disciples came away from their meeting with the Risen Christ on the road to Emmaus saying, 'Did not our hearts burn within us?' If only everyone could come away from our liturgical celebrations saying the same!

Through both Word and Sacrament the Lord comes to touch and transform our hearts. True religion is a love relationship with God, a thing of the 'heart' (in the sense of our deepest inner self), and we should try to celebrate the liturgy in a way that touches the heart. Our liturgy must address the spiritual hunger and thirst of God's people. We come together to lift our hearts to the Father, to be nourished by the Risen Lord who is the Word of God and the Bread of Life, and to drink of the Living Water that is the Holy Spirit.

Our parish communities and our liturgy should be the fountain, the living spring, the well from which people can quench their spiritual thirst with the joy of salvation.



RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Becoming and being a Christian is a journey of faith that takes place within the pilgrim community of the faithful. Indeed, this process of welcome is sometimes called 'Journey in Faith' rather than RCIA.

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is the "exemplar and rule for all Christian initiation" (Bishops of England, Scotland and Wales, 1988). It is the normative way for adults to be welcomed through Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion into the Catholic Church. Such a process aims to integrate new members into the faith and life of the parish community and the diocese.

Far from being an imposition aimed at making becoming a Catholic more difficult, the RCIA or 'Journey in Faith' is a positive way of enriching and deepening the identity of a parish community, and is one of the special gifts to the Catholic Church of the Second Vatican Council.

Although the RCIA team of the priest and catechists plays a vital role in this process, the whole Catholic community has a responsibility to welcome and support those on their journey to initiation or reception. This needs to be made visible especially in liturgical celebrations. When these celebrations do not happen, or are reduced to a bare minimum, both the people being welcomed and the parish community are deprived.

It is diocesan policy that the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (sometimes called 'Journey in Faith') is the normative process for welcoming unbaptised adults as well as baptised adults seeking reception into full communion with the Catholic Church. The Rite allows for flexibility in special circumstances, but every parish or cluster of parishes should have an RCIA programme in place. This is already well-established in most parishes in our diocese. Smaller parishes without such a programme could organise RCIA with neighbouring parishes, and share resources.

Unless there is a very strong pastoral reason why this should not be the case, initiation or reception should take place at the Easter Vigil.

There are four main stages in the process of initiation. How these are organised will vary from parish to parish depending on the length of the programme (e.g. one year or two):

- (1) **Enquiry:** people expressing an interest in becoming a Catholic explore together what this might mean. In a one-year programme, such a period might last from the Summer or Autumn until Christmas, leading to the **Rite of Acceptance or Welcome** in the parish at the beginning of January.
- (2) From the Rite of Acceptance, enquirers become either a **Catechumen** (if preparing for Baptism) or a **Candidate** (if a baptised Christian preparing to be received into full communion with the Catholic Church). This leads up to the **Rite of Election** with the Bishop at the Cathedral on the afternoon of the First Sunday of Lent. Unless there are insuperable practical difficulties, all Catechumens and Candidates from across the diocese should attend this celebration with their priests, sponsors, families, friends and members of their parish communities.
- (3) The period of Lent is for catechumens (known as 'the elect' after the Rite of Election) and candidates a special period of **Purification and Enlightenment**, during which they are given more intense spiritual preparation with the prayerful support of the parish community. For the catechumens, as full a use as possible should be made of the rites provided (Scrutinies, presentation of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, etc). This leads to the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) at the Easter Vigil. The newly-initiated with their sponsors and families could be invited to a simple social event immediately after the vigil (whether just a glass of wine or a parish party).
- (4) From the Easter Vigil until Pentecost, there follows the period of **Post-Baptismal Catechesis** (or *Mystagogia*) during which the newly-baptised (neophytes) and the newly-received deepen their understanding of the mystery of Christ and his Church, and are helped to be integrated into the daily life, worship, devotions and mission of the church. The group usually continues to meet during this time.

BAPTISM

By our baptism, we are immersed into the life of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, and so made new people, delivered from the power of sin and set on the path to holiness. We are immersed into the mystery of Christ and his Church, as beloved daughters and sons of the Father in his family, as sisters and brothers of one another in Christ, and as the living temple of the Holy Spirit. That is both an awesome gift of grace from God, and an awesome responsibility for parents to take on for their children. It is clear that we can be much better prepared for baptism, much more involved in all baptisms in our parish communities, and much more committed to welcome the newly-baptised into the lives of our parish families.

“It is essential that baptism be preceded by an appropriate preparation, in at least one meeting or more with the family and godparents...in order to make them aware of the meaning of presenting their child to be baptised and their responsibility in this. Baptism might even be an opportunity to revive the grace of baptism in the family, among the godparents and in the parish”

(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p. 44)

“It is also important to include the parish in this occasion in some way (publishing the names of those being baptised in the church and offering prayers for them, for their parents and godparents during the eucharistic celebration on Sunday, celebrating the rite of baptism during a Sunday Mass) because baptism not only concerns the family and godparents but also the entire Christian community which receives one of its new members”

(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p. 44)

Baptism preparation

It is diocesan policy that every parish provide a full and adequate preparation programme for infant baptism, and that attendance be required for parents having their first child baptised, as well as for others when appropriate. Godparents should also attend when possible.

Baptism is a wonderful opportunity to renew links between parents and the community of the Church, and it is a missed opportunity if there is no more than a filling-in of forms and the service itself. Each parish has different resources available.

- (1) Couples or individuals expecting a baby are encouraged to come

forward for a **blessing for pregnancy**. This would be a good time to enrol for baptism preparation.

- (2) The diocese recommends a **baptism preparation course** of two or three evenings, or if necessary a longer weekend session, perhaps made available every few months, and led by lay catechists with involvement by a priest or deacon. Parents (and godparents when available) of children being baptised in the coming months meet together. Parishioners could be available to provide tea and coffee, and look after any children. The parents should still complete the forms with the priest or deacon so that personal contact can be made; it is good for the priest or deacon baptising the child to visit the family in their home before the baptism to go through the details of the service. In some small parishes, the course could be led by clergy. Alternatively clusters of neighbouring parishes could organise preparation together.
- (3) The course should include discussion of why they want their child baptised; an understanding of the heart of the meaning of baptism, as being immersed into the mystery of the life of the Triune God and into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, and so delivered from original sin, as well as initiation into the community of the Church as God's family; and an understanding of Christian initiation as a journey of gradually deeper belonging, leading to First Communion, Confirmation and a life-time of active sharing in the life and mission of the Church. The Rite itself can be used as a way of leading the parents to an understanding of its meaning.
- (4) Suitable **audio-visual materials** can be effectively used in such a programme.
- (5) The Diocesan Commission for Evangelisation will monitor suitable

programmes and resources, and provide training for baptism preparation catechists as needed.

- (6) **For an infant to be baptised, the Catholic Church requires there to be a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic faith.** This must always be judged with pastoral sensitivity and love. If such a hope is truly lacking, the baptism is to be deferred (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canon 868; *Instruction on Infant Baptism*, n. 28). Any such decision is one of 'pastoral delay' rather than refusal, in order to help the parents be more ready to undertake the very serious commitment involved in having their child baptised.
- (7) If parents who are not parishioners ask for baptism for their child, Canon 857 # 2 should be borne in mind: 'As a rule and unless a just reason suggests otherwise, an adult is to be baptised in his or her proper parish church, and an infant in the proper parish church of the parents.'
- (8) **Godparents** should be chosen carefully, and with a full understanding of their role. Only one godparent is required. Any godparent is there to represent the Catholic Church, and must therefore be a confirmed, practising Catholic aged 16 or above (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 874). Other dedicated Christians are invited to be 'Christian Witnesses' at a baptism, and will continue to be examples of Christian living for the child as he or she grows up.

Celebration of Baptism

Baptism involves welcome into the community of the Church. It can never, therefore, be a private ritual simply for the family and friends of those being baptised. There can be no such thing as a private baptism.

- (1) **The names** of those to be baptised should be announced in the parish newsletter, and including in the Intercessions at Mass.

- (2) **Baptism during Sunday Mass** highlights most strongly the communal aspect of baptism. When celebrated with sensitivity to the congregation, and making full use of the pastoral options allowed in the liturgy, such a Mass need not take much longer than an ordinary Sunday Mass. A large parish may need to adopt a policy regarding how often baptism is celebrated at Sunday Mass.
- (3) When Baptism is not celebrated during Mass, the baptism service should be announced in the parish newsletter, and the **whole parish community** invited to participate. This does not mean the whole parish has to be invited to the Christening Party!
- (4) When Baptism is not celebrated during Mass, the diocese recommends a **public welcome** of the newly-baptised and their family at Mass the following Sunday. This could take place at the beginning of Mass, after the greeting.

Follow-Up to Baptism

- (1) The priest or deacon who baptises the child should pay a **pastoral visit** to the family in their home some time after the baptism.
- (2) Some parishes find that a monthly '**Buggy Mass**' (for parents with their babies, toddlers and pre-school children) on a weekday morning is a good way to draw young parents into the liturgical and social life of the parish, and to meet other people. Such a Mass can be celebrated very simply, in a child-friendly setting suitable for wandering toddlers and with nappy-changing facilities nearby.
- (3) Parishes could consider an **annual Mass** or other celebration to which all babies and children baptised during the past year are invited along with their parents, with a social afterwards. Advent or Christmastide is a good time for this. Parents could be invited to bring their babies and children forward for a special blessing during the Mass.

- (4) The parish could send a specially-designed **anniversary card** to each child on the first anniversary of their baptism.
- (5) Families are strongly encouraged to **celebrate yearly baptism anniversaries**, with special prayers, cards, presents and parties. This would be a wonderful way of building up a sense of being God's son or daughter, and of belonging to the family of God. Parents' baptism anniversaries should also be celebrated. The baptismal candle should be lit at any celebration on such an occasion.
- (6) Many young parents may appreciate the provision of **parenting sessions**. There are established courses for parents of babies and toddlers, primary age children and teenagers. Such courses usually involve small groups which are in themselves ways of supporting young parents and drawing them into the family life of the Church.

Unity with other Christians

Baptism is the sacred sacramental bond between all baptised Christians, and it is the foundation for the unity we already share. Because of our baptism, there is already a real although imperfect communion between Christians. By baptism, we are brothers and sisters in the one family of God. Perhaps local churches could hold a joint service each year during Eastertide to celebrate our common baptism. When one parent is a committed member of another Christian community, a priest or minister of that community may be invited to take some part in the rite of baptism, while leaving the Catholic priest or deacon to perform the central elements of the rite (cf. *Directory on Ecumenism, no 97*).



CONFIRMATION

The Sacrament of Confirmation was a major focus for our diocese in 2004, leading up to a renewal of our Confirmation in every parish at Pentecost. Our Confirmation is our Pentecost: anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are sent forth into the world by Christ himself to proclaim him to the world by our

words and deeds, and by the way we live, as individuals, families and parish communities. At our Confirmation, we 'go public' with our faith, ready to confess it boldly before others. Our Confirmation is our commissioning to be evangelists or gospel-bearers. All of us in our diocese who have been confirmed are called to fill East Anglia with the message of God's love in Jesus Christ.

Lord, fulfil your promise.

Send your Holy Spirit

to make us witnesses before the world

to the good news proclaimed

by Jesus Christ our Lord.

(The Roman Missal: alternative opening prayer for the Rite of Confirmation)

“the sacrament of Confirmation, together with Baptism, is the basis for the mission of the lay person in the Church, for it makes him or her a full member of the people of God...”

(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p. 45)

It is diocesan policy that Confirmation will always be administered by the Bishop, except in danger of death, or when the faculty has been given to a priest to receive a person into Full Communion with the Catholic Church or to confirm for some other special reason.

It is also diocesan policy that, except in the danger of death, Confirmation will be administered in secondary school Year 10 (the school year in which a young person reaches the age of 15) or above.

Confirmation Preparation

- (1) Preparation for Confirmation can be organised either in a parish, among a cluster of parishes or in a deanery. Any preparation programme should be full and adequate, enabling young people to reflect on their personal relationship with God and their belonging to the Church, helping them to grow in prayer, and preparing them to become full members of the Church, sharing the Church's mission to the world.
- (2) Although Confirmation will not be administered until Year 10, **preparation** can begin before

then. Some parishes now use a two-year preparation programme, combining teaching with social events, weekends away and fun activities.

- (3) Any preparation programme should take full account of the **Diocesan Confirmation Pack** provided to all parishes in the Summer of 2003.
- (4) **The Bishop** would welcome the opportunity to meet candidates for Confirmation during their time of preparation.
- (5) The Bishop is happy to visit parishes for Confirmation **no matter how small the group** of candidates. Alternatively, Confirmation celebrations could be organised with neighbouring parishes.

Celebration of Confirmation

(1) **All Confirmation Masses should be organised using the norms issued by the Bishop in July 2003.**

(2) **There will be an annual Mass in the diocese (usually on Pentecost Sunday) for the confirmation of adults.** This will take place either at the Cathedral or at Walsingham.

Follow-Up to Confirmation

“It is necessary that there be a follow-up of those who have received confirmation for, at least, a year after they have received the sacrament. Various appropriate works should be provided for them in the parish, and they can be incorporated into apostolic movements which suit their age so that they might live the grace of confirmation concretely in their lives”

(*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, p. 46)

No matter how well we prepare young people for Confirmation, and how well the Confirmation is celebrated, good follow-up is essential if they are to be drawn more deeply into the life, liturgy and work of the Church.

- (1) **A post-Confirmation group** is strongly recommended, perhaps meeting monthly, and combining ‘faith, food and fun.’ Such a group could explore and put into action practical ideas for bringing the good news to others, e.g. through care projects, work for justice and peace, involvement in the liturgy.
- (2) **An anniversary card** could be sent to each person from the parish on the first anniversary of their Confirmation.
- (3) **A first anniversary reunion Mass** in the parish, with a celebration (e.g. barbecue) afterwards could be organised, perhaps with involvement from previous Confirmation groups.
- (4) The diocese is exploring the possibility of an **annual diocesan Mass for young people confirmed during the previous year (or years).**



EUCCHARIST

‘At the heart of the life of the Catholic Church has always been the celebration of the Eucharist, or the Mass as Catholics often call it. Taking part in the Mass is the hallmark of the Catholic, central and crucial to our Catholic identity... For Catholics now, as in the past, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. It is the vital centre of all that the Church is and does, because at its heart is the real presence of the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, continuing and making available his saving work among us’
(Catholic Bishops of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales in *One Bread One Body*, 1998, no. 3).

Everything said above about the importance of the Mass is true also for our diocesan family, for every parish in our diocese, and for every small community, family and individual in each parish. This is why we need to find ways in our imminent future with fewer priests to ensure that the Mass itself remains the heart of our Catholic life. No other forms of worship, even those which include the distribution of Holy Communion, can substitute for the Mass as the memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ. If the Sacrifice of the Mass is to

remain the centre of our Catholic life together, all of us – priests and people together – will have to be sacrificial and generous, flexible and adaptable, in our attitude to where and when we can get to Mass each Sunday.

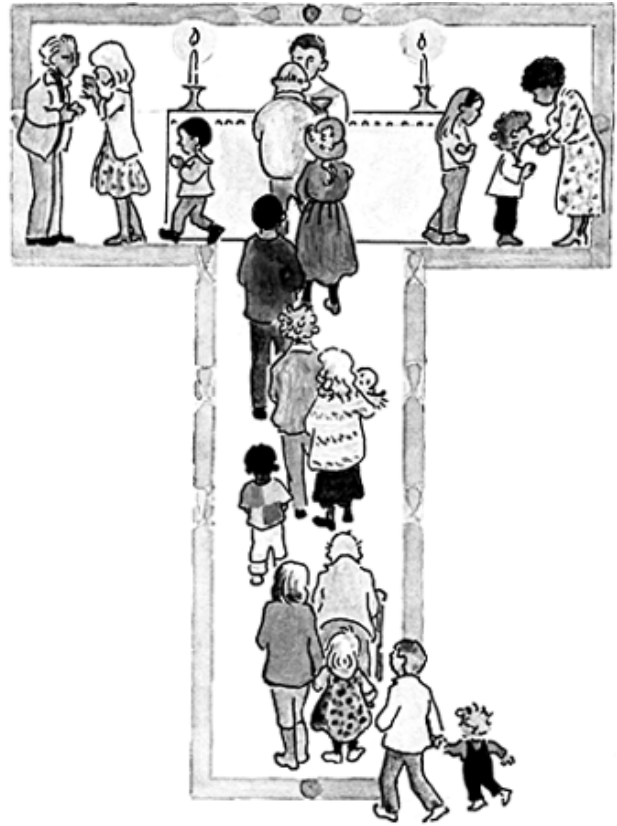
The Mass is the celebration of a pilgrim people, a community on the move. At the end of each Mass, like the people of Israel at the end of the first Passover Meal, the Lord tells us to 'Go forth', to 'Go forward'. We set off to continue our pilgrim journey, nourished by the new manna from heaven, the Bread of Life himself.

It is the Risen Lord who calls us to gather for the Eucharist, who draws us deeper into his life, and who sends us out into the world to bring his presence to others. The Risen Jesus in person is the heart of the Mass. It is the person of the Divine Word who says to us of the Scripture readings: 'Take and read'. It is the Saviour himself who says to us of his Body and Blood, 'Take and eat', 'Take and drink'. Each time we come to Mass, the Lord says to us: 'Come to me', 'Follow me' and 'Go in my name'.

But there is more to the Mass than the 'here and now'. In some mysterious way, made possible by the overshadowing presence of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Supper we celebrate is a foretaste of the Great Banquet of heaven. All who come to Mass should catch a glimpse of what heaven will be like. Now there's a challenge to all who lead and minister and participate at every celebration of Mass in our diocese. How can we make each Mass more 'heavenly', a true foretaste of the communion of saints awaiting us at the end of time?

"This major sacrament requires a special effort of the Church so that the Eucharist and its celebration take their proper place in the believing community. In addition to the daily Mass, which must not become simply a habit, the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday must receive special attention. This pastoral activity includes: serious preparation for Sunday so that it might be a weekly Easter celebration in the life of the faithful (suitable time for Sunday and daily Mass, the homily and its delivery and content speak to the life of the listeners, preparation of the texts in fluent and suitable language, appropriate songs, simple gestures and initiatives which might break the routine and fill the celebration with life and vitality)."

(*General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land*, p. 47)



The Celebration of Mass

- (1) Like every other aspect of the life and mission of the Church, our liturgy is always open to renewal. **Mass can be celebrated better** – more prayerfully, more fruitfully, with more active and conscious participation by all, and with better homilies by the celebrant (bishop included).
- (2) The whole congregation can prepare better for Sunday Mass by **reflecting prayerfully on the Scripture readings** during the previous week, and by their prayerful 'coming to quiet' before Mass begins.
- (3) Mass can so easily become too full of words. Times of prayerful **silence** should be part of the Eucharist, for example after a Scripture reading or after Holy Communion. We need to learn how to be silent in a positive way, and to welcome silence as the voice of God.

- (4) **'Noble simplicity'** was key to the Second Vatican Council's approach to renewing much of the liturgy. There is plenty of room for beauty in the liturgy, making full use of the wonder of creation and the talents of God's people. The Catholic Church embraces the part played by the senses in our human response to God in worship, for example in art, architecture and music. But 'noble simplicity' excludes all forms of ostentation.
- (5) The Mass is a sacramental liturgy, **full of sacred signs**. The most should be made of those signs in the spirit of 'noble simplicity'. For example, always in keeping with the official rubrics, the reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds is encouraged (cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 100). Moreover, people should receive hosts at Mass consecrated at that same Mass: care should be taken to consecrate enough bread at Mass for all present (cf. *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 89). The reserved sacrament should be used only once hosts consecrated at that Mass have been distributed.
- (6) **The Ministry of the Word** is an importance service at Mass. Careful selection and adequate training is needed for those who undertake this ministry (Readers). It is also suggested that Ministers of the Word be commissioned in some way, and have their commissioning renewed in the same way as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. The diocese will offer to parishes, clusters and deaneries opportunities for training and ongoing formation for Readers, and strongly recommends that parishes hold an annual renewal of commissioning for readers (perhaps at Mass on Bible

Sunday – the second Sunday of Advent).

Parish readers on the rota for the following Sunday are encouraged to meet to reflect on the Scripture readings so that they have a good understanding of what they are reading. Such a gathering could be open to other parishioners.

- (7) **Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion** play an important role when needed in assisting priests and deacons in distributing Holy Communion at Mass and to the sick. In our diocese, anyone taking on such a ministry must be invited by their parish priest; attend both parish training and a diocesan commissioning day; and be commissioned by the Bishop (for one year, renewable on an annual basis by the parish priest). Anyone in School Year 10 and above who has been confirmed may be a minister.
- (8) Our diocese warmly welcomes girls and women as **altar servers** alongside boys and men, at the discretion of the local parish priest. Most parishes already give positive affirmation and thanks to their altar servers in some way each year (e.g. special Mass with renewal of commitment, special events, parties, etc). The diocese is currently considering an annual diocesan event for altar servers.

Ministry of Music at Mass

Many people in our parishes place their diverse musical talents at the service of the Church's worship, and this generosity is accepted and welcomed. **Music** plays a very important part in the celebration of the liturgy, especially Sunday Mass. There is certainly a place for choirs, singers and musicians to contribute their own specialist gifts to the liturgy, but the primary ministry of church musicians of any kind is to promote the active participation of the whole people: 'Through suitable instruction and practices, the people should be gradually led to a fuller – indeed, to

a complete – participation in those parts of the singing which pertain to them’ (Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Instruction on Sacred Music*, 1967, n. 3b).

Particularly highlighted for being sung by everyone are the ‘Kyrie’ (‘of its nature it is a cry of the people of God for his mercy’) and the ‘Sanctus’ which should be sung or said by ‘the entire congregation, in union with the heavenly powers’; ‘the voices of all should join in with that of the priest’ (*General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, 1969, nos. 30, 55, 108, 168). The ‘Agnus Dei’ should usually be sung with the people responding, rather than by a choir on its own (*ibid*, no. 56).

There is, of course, much room at Mass for the great heritage of Catholic sacred music, including plainsong and polyphony, but the norms above are meant to ensure that the whole congregation is allowed to take its full active part as the community at worship.

One final point about music at Sunday Mass is highlighted by Pope John Paul in his letter *Dies Domini*: ‘efforts must be made to ensure that the celebration (of Sunday Mass) has the festive character appropriate to the day commemorating the Lord’s Resurrection. To this end, it is important to devote attention to the songs used by the assembly, since singing is a particularly apt way to express a joyful heart, accentuating the solemnity of the celebration and fostering the sense of a common faith and a shared love’ (*Dies Domini*, n. 50).



REDISCOVERING SUNDAY SACRAMENT OF EASTER

It may seem strange to find ‘Sunday’ in a Diocesan Pastoral Plan, but Sunday is the Lord’s Day, and it is the special day for any Church family. In 1998, Pope John Paul II wrote an inspiring letter on keeping the Lord’s Day holy (*Dies Domini*): ‘Sunday is a day which is at the very heart of the Christian life’. The Holy Father strongly urges everyone ‘to rediscover Sunday’ (n. 7).

It is true, of course, that our way of life today is radically different even to a few decades ago. For many people, Sunday is no longer a day of rest. Increasingly, it is no different to any other day. And yet as human beings we need a day each week when we can stop, slow down, recover our energies and spend quality time with those we love. And as Christians,

we need to **keep Sunday special**, to do all we can to preserve or restore the place of Sunday in our personal and family lives.

At the heart of a Catholic Sunday is the celebration of Mass. There we celebrate the wonder of our creation by God, and the wonder of our re-creation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At Mass, the Risen Christ gathers us together around himself, unites us more closely with himself, draws us into his sacrifice of himself, and nourishes us with the gift of himself. ‘For the Christian, Sunday is above all an Easter celebration, wholly illumined by the glory of the Risen Christ’ (Pope John Paul II, *Dies Domini*, n. 8). St Augustine called Sunday ‘a sacrament of Easter’.

Each family is asked to take a fresh look at how they spend the Lord’s Day. Could it be more of a day when the family is together? Is there a family meal together? Can we make it more of a day when we take our much-needed Sabbath rest? And how central is the celebration of Mass to our Sundays? Is it – as the Second Vatican Council puts it – the ‘source and summit of our Christian lives’?

Pope John Paul teaches us that ‘**the community aspect of the Sunday celebration should be particularly stressed**’ because ‘nothing is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day and his Eucharist’ (*Dies Domini*, n. 35). What can our parishes do to highlight the place of Sunday in the lives of the Catholic community? The Mass is the heart of it all, but other forms of prayer and social gatherings may also help. Efforts must be made to ensure that there is ‘within the parish a lively sense of community, in the first place through the community celebration of Sunday Mass’ (*Dies Domini*, n. 35).

Because of this community aspect of Sunday Mass, and our preparation for an imminent future with fewer priests, it is diocesan policy that there should only be as many places of worship and celebrations of Mass in each parish as are really needed rather than preferred. For some practical guidelines, see page 65. Priests need permission from the Bishop to say more than one Mass each day, and they may not celebrate more than three Masses on any day (with Sunday beginning on Saturday evening). See *Code of Canon Law*, canon 905.

The ideal remains a single celebration of Mass for each parish family.

As the Holy Father points out, liturgical directives ask that ‘on Sundays and holy days the Eucharistic celebrations held normally in other churches and chapels be coordinated with the celebration in the parish church, in order “to foster the sense of the Church community, which is nourished and expressed in a particular way by the community celebration on Sunday, whether around the Bishop, especially in the cathedral, or in the parish assembly, in which the pastor represents the Bishop” (*Dies Domini*, n. 35).

This is why ‘on Sunday, the day of gathering, small group Masses are not to be encouraged’ (*Dies Domini*, n. 36).

This also applies to the celebration of Mass with a small congregation in the parish church or elsewhere on a Sunday. Unless there is a real pastoral need, or the church cannot hold the entire community at one Mass, the parish family should gather at a single celebration of Mass.

Clearly in our modern society many factors need to be taken into account. Distance is a particular challenge in our diocese. But working towards a single Sunday Mass is not simply a practical necessity for a future with fewer priests: it is something suggested by the very nature of the Sunday Mass as the gathering of God’s family.

Above all, every Sunday Mass should be a celebration of Easter, a celebration of the Resurrection of the Lord. That simple teaching may challenge the way we celebrate Sunday Mass. As already stated earlier, Pope John Paul reminds us that ‘efforts must be made to ensure that the celebration (of Sunday Mass) has the festive character appropriate to the day commemorating the Lord’s Resurrection. He highlights the importance of ‘the joy of the weekly Easter’ if we are to rediscover the full meaning of Sunday.

What can everyone involved in the liturgy - including priests, musicians, welcomers, and each member of the congregation - do to enhance Sunday as a day of joy and Sunday Mass as a celebration full of the joy of Easter?



Services of the Word & Holy Communion

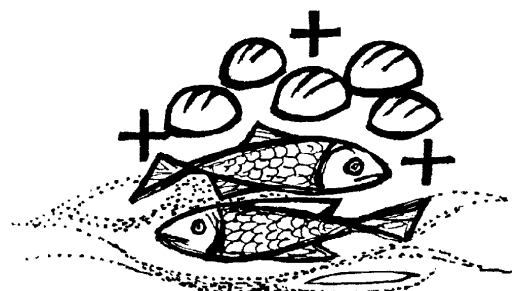
As we continue to discuss the use of “**Celebrations of the Word and Communion**” in our diocese, especially as the number of priests declines, we will need to take full account of the various statements from Rome on this issue. (e.g. *Redemptionis Sacramentum* nos. 162-167).

Only when the celebration of the Eucharist is impossible on a Sunday (either in the local church or at somewhere nearby) can another form of celebration be used (162, 164). In our diocese, with the current number of active and retired priests, a “Celebration of the Word and Holy Communion” should be used only in emergency (for example the sudden illness of the priest with no supply possible at such short notice); permission must be sought first from either the Bishop or Vicar General.

We should also note, however, that *Redemptionis Sacramentum* does not encourage regular weekday celebrations of this kind (166); the Bishops are asked prudently to discern “whether Holy Communion ought to be distributed at such gatherings”.

It also suggests that it is preferable not to have a single lay person lead the whole celebration (165). In the introduction to the authorised *Celebrations of the Word and Communion*, the rubrics recommend that “the leader does not exercise several ministries within one liturgy”, and that the leader of such a service (although perhaps an already-commissioned Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion) should be assisted by other ministers such as readers, ministers of communion, musicians. Only “if necessary” should the leader read the Gospel.

The Bishops of England and Wales intend to discuss these issues together, but in the meantime all should take account of what is stated in *Redemptionis Sacramentum*.



First Reconciliation (Confession) and First Holy Communion

First Holy Communion is not simply the great gift of receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus for the first time. It is also a sacrament of deeper initiation or welcome into the Church. A child should become more 'churched' as a fruit of receiving Holy Communion, and parents have the key responsibility for ensuring this happens by their own example of regular participation at Mass and receiving the sacraments.

It is diocesan policy that First Holy Communion should be received in primary school Year 3 (the school year in which a child reaches the age of 8) or above. A child's readiness for First Holy Communion will be decided by parents, child, priests and catechists together.

- (3) Catechists involved with First Confession and First Communion preparation are encouraged to explore the range of **programmes and materials available**, so that whatever is used best combines good Catholic teaching with a child-friendly approach appropriate for 7-8 year olds.
- (4) The Diocesan Commission for Evangelisation will explore available resources and provide **ongoing formation** as appropriate for First Confession and First Communion catechists.
- (5) **Parents** should be involved as fully as possible in their children's preparation for these sacraments. Adult formation sessions on Reconciliation and the Eucharist should always be part of any children's preparation programme. There are published preparation programmes which seek fully to involve parents in the whole process (e.g. *Celebrating the Gift of Forgiveness* and *Celebrating the Gift of Jesus*).
- (6) Children and parents should be encouraged to be involved on a regular basis in Sunday Mass. **Suitably prepared liturgies** during the preparation programme (e.g. an Inscription Mass) can help them to feel more 'at home' at church and part of the parish family. The children can read the Scripture readings and intercessions, bring up the gifts, hold candles beside those distributing Communion, etc.
- (7) Because First Holy Communion is a rite of deeper initiation into the church, usually between Baptism and Confirmation, it should as far as possible **take place within the setting of the parish family** rather than a special Mass for First Communion children and their families alone. In a small parish, there is little problem with having First Communions at an ordinary Sunday Mass. When there are large numbers, some parishes have found it better to divide up the children over a number of Sundays at the main parish Masses; this is then followed by a 'Solemn Communion' Mass a week or so later when all the children come together and are handed their certificates, followed by a party. Such an approach can help children and their parents to focus on the spiritual dimension of the actual First Communion celebration.
- (8) As with all sacraments, **follow-up** is important for children who have made their First Holy Communion. There should be parish activities which proactively seek to involve them (Brownies, Cub Scouts, children's groups, etc). Children who have made their First Communion can also be invited after a few months to become altar servers.
- (9) As part of our diocesan and parish concern for **child protection**, if the photos of First Communion children are

to be displayed in the church, hall or other public place, no child's name (even Christian name) should be identified in any way with any photo.



FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION (Confession)

The Sacrament of Forgiveness and Reconciliation is one of the Lord's great gifts to us. It is a Sacrament of Resurrection by which the Risen Lord raises sinners from the death of sin and leads them forward on the path of holiness. It is a sacrament of liberation and healing, involving a deeply personal encounter with Christ the Reconciler through the priest in the community of the Church.

There is little doubt that Catholics in our country celebrate this sacrament much less frequently than was the custom in the past, but it is often celebrated today in a way which is more evidently a powerfully healing encounter with Christ the Good Shepherd. For many people, it is a sacrament of conversion, a vital part of our life-long journey from sin to holiness. For some, it is very much a sacrament of 'return' in which the Father welcomes back his prodigal sons and daughters with an embrace of love, replacing the cloak of holiness around them, putting a ring on their finger, and celebrating their return with joy.

This sacrament has many names: penance, confession, forgiveness. For all of us, whether our failings be great or small, it is a sacrament of reconciliation, making present the fruits of the great gift of Reconciliation between God and the world that Christ has achieved by his death and resurrection. Calling the sacrament 'Reconciliation' also reminds us that sin and holiness are never a private affair: sin impairs our relationship with others as well as with God; forgiveness reconciles us to one another as well as to the Lord.

Our Catholic communities and our personal Christian lives are the poorer without this sacrament, and we need to put some careful thought into how we can best encourage people to return to its celebration.

- (1) **The diocesan focus for 2005 will be the Sacrament of Forgiveness and Reconciliation**, along with a

special outreach to those Catholics we often call 'lapsed' but many of whom are awaiting an invitation to 'come home'. This will include special prayers and liturgies, a pastoral letter and literature. There will also be an ongoing formation day on the topic for priests, led by Bishop Michael.

- (2) **Every parish is asked to look at the way this sacrament is celebrated.** Is it at the best time for people? Could the special place for the celebration of sacrament be made more prayerful? Is full use made of the Rite of Penance, or is our confessional practice (as priests and penitents) little different from days of old? The emphasis should be on a joyous, welcoming and peaceful atmosphere.
- (3) **More positive teaching and preaching** is needed in parishes on reconciliation in general and on the sacrament in particular.
- (4) **Rite 2** (Communal Rite of Reconciliation with individual confessions) should be used more frequently in order to emphasise the communal nature of sin and reconciliation. It is widely thought that Rite 2 is the most appropriate celebration for First Reconciliation: after a simple liturgy, those priests available could sit at different places in the church rather than in the Reconciliation Room, with appropriate 'covering' music in the background to ensure privacy (Taize music is particularly useful for this). Children could each light a candle or votive light and place it before the altar after being reconciled.

Similar services are appropriate before First Holy Communion, and during primary school years until they are more ready for Rite 1 (Rite of Reconciliation with individual penitents). Such communal celebrations (perhaps organised at deanery or cluster level in order to ensure a number of priests) should be made available at high points of

the liturgical year, and especially during Lent and Advent.

- (5) Before celebrating Reconciliation for the first time (First Confession), children and their parents could be invited to **special celebrations of God's forgiving love**, informal liturgies focusing on God's unconditional love and readiness to forgive (e.g. using the Parable of the Prodigal son).



ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is perhaps the most 'hidden' sacrament in the Catholic Church. Many Catholics still understand it as 'Extreme Unction', as a final anointing in preparation for death, and are therefore reluctant to ask for the sacrament for themselves or for relatives. Education is clearly needed on the place of this sacrament in Catholic life. It is a sacrament of God's healing love, strength and peace for those who are seriously ill, or weak through advanced age, or about to undergo major surgery. Receiving the Sacrament of Anointing should be normal for a Catholic who is seriously sick in some way.



This sacrament is also a sacrament of 'communion' with the Church: it helps keep the sick and elderly 'in touch' with the life of the church. Perhaps the best way to highlight this understanding is the public celebration of the Anointing of the Sick. Pope John Paul's celebration of anointing at St George's Cathedral, Southwark was one of the most moving moments of his visit to Britain in 1982.

- (1) There is already an annual diocesan celebration of the Anointing of the Sick at Walsingham during the SVP Pilgrimage of the Sick.
- (2) **The diocese recommends an annual parish or cluster Mass with the Anointing of the Sick.**

Any such Mass needs to be sensitive to the needs of the sick, especially regarding the length of the Mass. A simple social afterwards can help to make the sick feel a sense of belonging to the parish family.

- (3) The sick and housebound are always a primary focus for the pastoral care of the Church, as they can all too easily become cut off from the spiritual life of the Church, especially from the Mass. Receiving Holy Communion keeps them 'in communion' with Christ and the Church, and their own life of prayer and witness is gift of tremendous richness for the parish community.



HOLY MATRIMONY

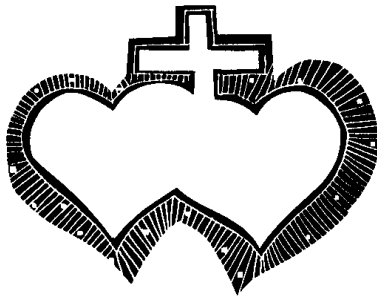
The number of marriages in Catholic churches in East Anglia has declined considerably in recent decades. Many people are already questioning the future of the institution of marriage. And yet being married remains the main way most Catholics live out their Confirmation calling to give public witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Our diocesan approach to the support of marriage and family life needs to take full account of the fact that few marriages nowadays are between two practising Catholics. Great sensitivity and welcome must be shown to the spouse and parent who is not a Catholic. We can sometimes be too demanding of such situations, and it can be very difficult for some Catholics to live in full the Church's vision of marriage and family. It can be particularly difficult for the Catholic parent to share their faith with their children, and hand on to them the Good News of Jesus Christ. And yet we also need to acknowledge warmly those non-Catholic husbands and wives who give such generous support to their Catholic spouses in the upbringing of their children in the Catholic faith. Many come to Mass with their families on Sundays, and become key members of the parish family. They are warmly welcome, and a blessing to our Catholic communities.

As Christ's Church, we need to support married couples and families, during good times and bad. We must be a caring family for

the widowed, separated and divorced, for single parents, and for single people in general. But we must also present Christian marriage as a great gift of God's joyful love to our world, as well as giving special care to preparing couples for marriage.

- (1) **Priests** are asked to use every suitable opportunity to preach the positive and joyful meaning of Christian marriage.
- (2) Care and time needs to be given to **long-term preparation** for married life in general and the sacrament of marriage in particular. Our Catholics schools have a vital part to play in this process. There should be more preaching and teaching about the distinctive Christian understanding of marriage in our parishes. Full use should be made of opportunities for such teaching, for example during Confirmation preparation programmes, youth retreats and missions, etc. A positive appreciation of and desire for marriage can only be brought about through developing a general **culture of vocation** among our young people.



- (3) Care also needs to be given to **immediate preparation** for marriage. Such preparation includes the necessary paper-work and organising the wedding ceremony, but the heart of all preparation should be a positive presentation of the meaning of the sacrament of marriage within the setting of the couple's relationship with God, their vocation from him, and their involvement in the community of the Church. In addition, short courses for couples preparing for marriage are provided by **Marriage Care** from their various centres across the diocese.

- (4) The Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life will explore and provide information on other forms of support for couples preparing for marriage and living their marriage (e.g. Engaged Encounter, Marriage Encounter, Teams of Our Lady).
- (5) The diocese will seek to give more support to **Marriage Care**, whose professionally-trained marriage counsellors offer counselling for those with marital and relationship difficulties. Most of their centres provide information on fertility awareness and instruction on natural methods of family planning.
- (6) More education needs to be given on the principles and methods of **Natural Family Planning**. There are contact addresses in the Diocesan Year Book.
- (7) In a country where the birth rate is declining and the average age of the population increasing, the Catholic Church has a vital role to play in promoting **the vocation to parenthood** and the gift of children as a blessing from God for the future of humanity.
- (8) **Every celebration of marriage should be a community celebration.** The names of couples preparing for marriage should be included in the Intercessions at Mass, and the dates and times of weddings announced in the parish newsletter. Couples could be encouraged to celebrate their engagement with a prayer and blessing in church.
- (9) When one of the couple is a committed member of another Christian community, a priest or minister of that community may be invited to take some part in the rite of marriage, while leaving the Catholic priest or deacon to perform the central elements of the rite (cf. *Directory on Ecumenism*, no 158).

- (10) The **follow-up** to the celebration of marriage is particularly important. If a couple are to move elsewhere after marriage, their details should be forwarded to the local parish priest. The church community needs to explore ways to support newly-married couples during their first few years of marriage and of parenthood. The Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life will continue the discussion of such topics begun at 'Listening 2004'.
- (11) **Every parish should provide an annual opportunity for the renewal of marriage vows.** If this takes place at Sunday Mass, special sensitivity should be shown to those present who are separated, divorced, experiencing marriage difficulties, widowed or single.
- (12) **An annual Jubilees Mass** in each parish, cluster or deanery is also strongly recommended. Such a celebration could take place on a Summer weekday evening, and be followed by simple refreshments. Those celebrating significant wedding anniversaries are invited to celebrate and renew their marriage commitment. This could also be combined with others celebrating special jubilees (e.g. ordination, religious life).
- (13) **Special care and welcome needs to be given to people who are separated and divorced, or experiencing marriage difficulties.** Some parishes establish supports for such people. The Association of Separated and Divorced Catholics has various representatives across the diocese (see the Diocesan Year Book).
- (14) **The whole community life of the parish,** with its liturgy and social life, should be supportive of marriage and family life precisely by seeking to be as inclusive as possible, as well as providing special groups and events for different age-groups (e.g. young wives, mothers and toddlers, etc).

A parish baby-sitting circle may be much appreciated.

- (15) Many of these issues will be taken up by a restored **Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life** resulting from the 'Listening 2004' process in our diocese.

DIOCESAN MARRIAGE TRIBUNAL

It is sometimes possible for people to move on from their current situation of irregular relationships (e.g. being divorced and re-married) and so take a full part in the life of the Church. The Diocesan Marriage Tribunal is our pastoral team of experienced and qualified canon lawyers who handle the investigation and judgement of marriage cases for nullity. The Tribunal can be contacted directly and confidentially at:
 Diocesan Marriage Tribunal, 21 Uppgate, Poringland, Norwich NR14 7SH
 or by e-mail at:
tribunal@east-angliadiocese.org.uk



a prayer for priestly vocations

Father,
 in your plan for our salvation
 you provide shepherds for your people.
 Fill your Church
 with the spirit of courage and love.
 Raise up worthy ministers for your altars,
 and ardent but gentle servants of the gospel.

Roman Missal

HOLY ORDERS

At the heart of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan is the greater involvement of lay people in the life of the Catholic Church in East Anglia at every level. That Church will not remain Catholic, however, without the ministry of those set aside by the Sacrament of Holy Orders to be Bishop, Priests and Deacons. We are by nature a deeply sacramental church, and ordained ministry is an essential gift from Christ to his Church.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sums up much of the Second Vatican Council's teaching: 'In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body,

Shepherd of his flock, High Priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth' (1548); 'Through the ordained minister, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers' (1549).

As a Catholic community, we are those from among whom Christ will call people to serve him as priests and deacons. One reason we will have fewer priests in our diocese in the future is that few parishes have 'provided' priests for the service of the Church. We must therefore keep vocations in our prayers, and care as best we can for the priests and deacons we already have.

Vocations

- (1) **Our Catholic schools** have a vital role to play in creating a culture of vocation, and in presenting a positive view of priestly ministry to our young people. The school should be a place where children and young people meet and get to know their priests, and where they are taught to understand the special ministry of the priest. Young people should be encouraged, as they begin to think about their futures and careers, their hopes and dreams, to ask what God might be calling them to do with the gifts he has given them, and explicitly and positively to include ordained ministry and religious life among the possibilities. School chaplains and careers advisors have an important role to play.
- (2) It is contact with the **local priest** which is most likely to make a young person first think about the priesthood. Every priest has a key role to play in presenting the priesthood as a joyful and fulfilling way to live one's life.

'A positive presentation of priestly ministry – good role models – will speak more loudly than words'
(*individual response*)

- (3) **Prayer for vocations is vital.** Every parish has been asked to have regular times of prayer specifically for vocations to ordained ministry and religious life,

as well as including the intention in the Intercessions at Mass. Our vocations team will continue to produce suitable materials for prayer, alongside the National Vocations Office.

- (4) Without putting undue pressure on them, **seminary students** from our diocese have a role to play in presenting the possibility of a priestly vocation to young people in our diocese, both in our schools and parishes.
- (5) Thought will be given to a new **vocations exhibition** for use in schools and parishes.

Celebrating Ordination

It is diocesan policy that all priestly and diaconal ordinations take place at the cathedral unless there is a very strong pastoral or personal reason for another venue. Any priest or deacon is ordained firstly for service of the diocese (cf. Code of Canon Law, canons 1010 & 1011).

A special celebration can later be held in the home parish of the person who has been ordained ('First Mass', etc).

- (1) Because of the essentially collegial nature of ordination, all the priests of the diocese are to be invited to every priestly ordination, and all deacons (and their wives) to every ordination to the permanent diaconate.
- (2) The order of service for any ordination should be arranged in full liaison with the Bishop and the Cathedral Dean.

Ongoing Formation

All ordained ministers need ongoing spiritual renewal and formation throughout their time of service. This is not an optional extra, but a pastoral necessity (cf. Canon 279).

- (1) **Our current programme of ongoing formation** for priests will be reviewed and renewed, primarily through discussions at deanery meetings.

- (2) Priests and deacons are expected to make an annual retreat. More needs to be provided for the **spiritual renewal** of our priests, through the provision of the opportunity for a diocesan retreat for priests, as well as occasional days of reflection. From 2005, the diocese will organise a study and social week and a priests' retreat in alternate years.
- (3) Work begun a few years ago on **regular review (or appraisal) of ministry** for priests needs to be taken up again and put into place after due consultation.
- (4) Greater opportunity for **sabbaticals** should be provided, within the limitations inevitably imposed by a declining number of priests. The increased pressures on priests precisely because of that decline may well make such sabbaticals more important.



Care for the Clergy

Those who lead and serve our parishes as ordained ministers need ongoing care and support – from the bishop and his team, from one another, and from the communities they serve. Parish priests in particular are often overstretched and overburdened. There is an increasing danger of the ‘privatisation’ of the priesthood and the isolation of our priests as most now live and work alone. The burdens on priests have increased during the ‘Forward & Outward Together’ process, but the hope is that some of the changes proposed in this plan will give priests more support so that they can exercise even more fruitfully a joyful and fulfilling ministry in our diocese.

“The mission placed on the shoulder of the parish priest requires also that he be taken care of. He needs human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral support from the ecclesial hierarchy, from his brother priests and from the faithful, especially from the committed faithful. Of course, this does not absolve the priest from taking care of himself in order to renew his gifts continually. This support must take the form of great solicitude for the basic and invaluable diocesan treasure represented by the parish priest:

- **spiritual care**, whereby he finds sufficient time to be with his Lord, who loves him, calls him and sanctifies him (spiritual retreats, both monthly and yearly, prayer, meditation and liturgical prayer, persevering in reading and meditating on the Word of God...) so that he does not lose his identity as a man of God and servant of the believing community;

- **human care**, whereby he preserves his human and social equilibrium, not being exposed to despair, disillusion and depression in a society which no longer supports him as it once did in the past; he must, therefore, allow himself sufficient time to renew his spiritual and bodily strength;

- **pastoral care**, whereby he receives permanent and serious formation, enabling him to understand what is happening around him in the Church and in society so that he is able to take appropriate initiatives. This pastoral care must provide the priests with instruments and means to facilitate pastoral work amidst the numerous and manifold demands all around him;

- **cultural, theological and human care**, whereby he does not get cut off from the Church or from society, through the regular organisation of programmes which include these dimensions of the life of the priest;

- **material care**, which measures up to the criteria of his needs as well as to the criteria of his vocation, mission and witness, so that he can make himself completely available for his basic mission in the parish.

The accompaniment of the parish priest, in love, tenderness and paternal support, helping him to understand the challenges, innovations, calls and responses, is a priority in the life of the diocese. “Do not neglect the spiritual gift which is in you” (1 Timothy 4.14), “that is why I am exhorting you to fan into a flame the gift that God gave you with the laying on of hands” (2 Timothy 1.6). “Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you, watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock can follow. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of glory” (1 Peter 5.2-4).”
(General Pastoral Plan for the Holy Land, p. 101-102)

- (1) **The spiritual, human, pastoral, intellectual and material care of our clergy is vital for the future of our diocese.** The Bishop has primary responsibility for such care, assisted especially by the Deans. The mutual support which flows from the brotherhood of priests is an essential dimension of such care, and this is a key reason for the deanery structure and the clustering of parishes.
- (2) Priests are entitled and encouraged to take a **weekly 'day off'**. Ideally this should be arranged in liaison with neighbouring parishes so that a nearby priest can be available in emergency: the name and phone number of the priest or priests who are 'covering' should be included in any answer-phone message. Such liaison is also important when arranging **holidays**, particularly when no full-time 'supply' has been arranged. A priest's entitlement to time away from the parish is clearly stipulated in the Code of Canon Law; the same applies for assistant priests as for parish priests.

'Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, the parish priest may each year be absent on holiday from his parish for a period not exceeding one month, continuous or otherwise. The days which the parish priest spends on the annual spiritual retreat are not reckoned in this period of vacation. For an absence from the parish of more than a week, however, the parish priest is bound to advise the local Ordinary.' (Canon 533 # 2)

- (3) All forms of **priestly fraternity** and mutual support are strongly encouraged. Some priests may wish to organise support groups, perhaps focused on a shared interest. Priests within a 'cluster' will hopefully visit each other and meet for a meal occasionally. 'Faith, food and fun' are as important for our priests as they are for our young people. Such 'clusters' provide a good setting for the care of sick and retired priests who live within one or other of the clustered parishes.

- (4) **The Bishop** asks priests whether there are ways he personally can provide additional opportunities for priests to come together in small groups for friendship and fraternity.
- (5) Special care and support needs to be given to **newly-ordained clergy**, especially during the first five years of ministry. The Bishop will meet regularly with newly-ordained priests. The Director of the Permanent Diaconate and his team will support newly-ordained permanent deacons.
- (6) **A priest will be given special responsibility for the support of our retired priests, and possibly those working outside the diocese.**
- (7) **A Diocesan Clergy Welfare Group** has been established to monitor aspects of practical care for clergy currently unable to work, of those in financial need, and those in retirement. This group will liaise with the East Anglia Sick and Retired Priests' Fund.
- (8) More care must be given to long-term support for priests **preparing for retirement.**
- (9) A 'portfolio' is being compiled of presbyteries and other properties in the diocese suitable as **places for active retirement for priests.**
- (10) **The Diocesan Sick and Retired Priests Fund, and the Clergy Pension Fund,** need very considerable increase in income if we are to be confident about providing an appropriate future for our priests when they retire.



Deacons

Deacons are ordained as sacramental images of Christ the Servant, to assist the bishop and priests of the diocese in their ministry. The Diocesan College of Deacons is already a significant body in the life of the diocese. The diaconal ministry is flexible, as it adjusts to the particular needs of the church at a particular time and place.

The present and future role of deacons in providing pastoral guidance and care to worshipping communities with no resident priest needs further discussion, with clear guidelines to be established. Deacons entrusted with such a service will always minister as assistants of the parish priest responsible for such communities. This is important in order to preserve the distinctive ministry of the deacon as a positive gift to the life of the diocese.

Deacons currently assist in a range of special chaplaincy work (in prisons and hospitals, with the police, etc) as well as working with priests and people in parishes. This forms of service can be developed within the limitations of deacons' available time and energy, and always being fully sensitive to their family lives and forms of employment.

- (1) The vocation to the diaconate will be included in all our **prayer for vocations**. We hope to expand the College of Deacons and develop the ministry of Deacons according to the needs of the diocese.
- (2) **The selection, formation, discernment and ongoing formation** of all deacons will be carried out in full accordance with the Bishops' Conference *Directory for the Formation of Deacons* and *Handbook for the Selection of Candidates for the Permanent Diaconate*.
- (3) Deacons in East Anglia are asked to make their primary focus their **'ministry of charity'**, and to seek to enable lay people to become more actively involved in practical care for those in need, and for justice and peace.



RELIGIOUS LIFE

'All religious, whether exempt or not, take their place among the collaborators of the diocesan bishop in his pastoral duty' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 927). All religious communities in East Anglia are an integral part of the diocese, each with their own particular charisms and contribution to the life of our diocesan family and the wider church.

- (1) **Regular area meetings** will be held between religious and the Bishop, focusing on a particular theme. These meetings will feed into the **annual Diocesan Meeting** of religious which provides a forum for all religious in the diocese.
- (2) The possibility will be explored of establishing a **Diocesan Vocations Team** to include vocations both to religious life and ordained ministry.
- (3) Individual religious should be kept in mind when seeking people with particular charisms and talents for **special service in the church**, whether in parish, cluster, deanery or diocese. Many are already very busy, and making full use of a wide range of skills.
- (4) The presence of religious communities, however small, is a **gift of God** to our diocese and its parishes. They provide places of prayer and welcome, a 'warm hearth' at the heart of the church with an influence far beyond their numbers. Religious are now often in a special position to enable lay people to become more responsibly involved in the life of the church.
- (5) Religious should be positively **invited and welcomed** to all parish events, ceremonies, etc.



FINANCES

It is diocesan policy that there be full openness and transparency about finances at every level (parish, diocese, etc).

This was something asked for in nearly all parish and deanery responses to 'Forward & Outward Together', and it is important that the stewards of our diocesan resources respond as fully as possible. Such transparency is part of the gift of trust which is so essential between priests and people.

What has also become very clear is the need for the diocese to move towards greater financial stability and security. If we are to develop our diocese in the way envisaged by this Diocesan Pastoral Plan, further financial resources will be needed. But even just to maintain our diocese, its parishes and schools at our present level, it is essential that we increase our giving to the Church.

Most parishioners are aware that a large proportion of the money given each week in the collection is sent to the Diocesan Finance Office. This proportion may have to increase. At the moment, a total of 33% of the offertory collection goes to central diocesan funds: 20% of this supports our Catholic schools; 4% goes into the Priests' Pension Fund; 1% to the Ministerial Formation Fund (which now includes lay formation); 8% goes into the General Diocesan Fund.

We should not think of this as money sent from our parish communities to some outside body we call the diocese. Each parish is an integral part, a living cell of the diocese, and we are all together one single diocesan family of East Anglia.

Just as in the early church, Christian communities share what they have with one another, and support each other.

Our diocese has few central funds, and most of the resources of the diocese are vested in its parishes. It is therefore important that parishes continue to support the mission and ministry of the whole diocesan family, and that they even be urged to do so more generously in the future than they have in the past.

Priests and people sometimes express concern about the number of second collections in our diocese. Some are required either by Rome or by our Bishops Conference (Catholic Education Service; Holy Land Shrines; Catholic Communications

Service; Catholic Trust for England and Wales; Peter's Pence; Apostleship of the Sea; Association for the Propagation of the Faith; CAFOD): all of these support the Catholic Church throughout England and Wales, including our diocese, and the work of the Church across the world. Others directly support essential activities in our own diocese (Catholic Children's Society; Ministerial Training; St Edmund's Fund; Diocesan Youth Service; Sick & Retired Priests Fund).

One major expense in every diocese is the care of sick and retired priests, and especially the provision of a pension for them on retirement. The East Anglia Sick and Retired Priests Fund needs building up considerably, and the Priests Pension Fund in particular is severely short of money and needs a major injection of money each year in order to ensure proper care for our priests after their long years of service to our diocese and its parishes. **The Catholic Children's Society is also in need of increased funding if it is to continue its vital work in our schools and for our children.**

- (1) In all matters concerning the finances of our diocese and its parishes, the requirements of the **Charity Commission** will be fully implemented.
- (2) Canon Law requires every parish to have a **Finance Committee**. When fully developed, such committees provide a key way in which lay people can share responsibility for administration in the parish, relieving the parish priest so that he can concentrate on his pastoral and priestly ministry. Every parish is strongly encouraged to make full use of such a committee, perhaps by developing it into a Finance & Building Committee responsible not only for the parish finances but also the general oversight of the maintenance and repair of church properties. Such a committee should make full use of professionals in the parish: e.g. qualified accountants, people with banking experience, architect, solicitor, health & safety officer, etc.
- (3) The diocese will help parishes to make far more of the **Gift Aid Scheme**.

- (4) **A parish fund-raising committee** would help to increase parish income; this is essential when major parish projects are proposed.
- (5) **The diocese** will publish in full its annual accounts, making use of the diocesan newspaper and website (when established in a new form).
- (6) **Every parish** should publish its annual accounts, so that parishioners know where their money goes.
- (7) We need to find a way to increase very considerably annual funding for our **Priests Pension Fund**. This may require an increase of the money given each year from parish offertory collections to diocesan central funds.
- (8) The best way to increase diocesan funding is to **increase parish funding**. The more that is given each week in the collection, the greater the resources available for both the diocese and its parish communities. Many people are already very generous. Many simply cannot give any more than they already do. **But everyone is asked to seriously budget what they give to their church, and to reflect on whether they could give more each week.** Could people who are employed give the equivalent of the wages for the first hour of each week's work, as the 'first-fruits' of their labour given to God and his Church? Or at least a reasonable percentage of their weekly wage? Although no-one should give to the church in a way that causes difficulties for themselves and their families, we may need a greater sense of being stewards of God's creation, responsible together for the life and work of his family.
- (9) Greater giving through **Standing Orders** is strongly encouraged.
- (10) People are encouraged to consider a **legacy** to the 'Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia', as a way of helping to ensure the long-term future of our diocesan family.

NEW STRUCTURES

It may well be that this is where you have begun reading this Diocesan Pastoral Plan, skipping the previous 58 pages to discover what plans there are for your deanery, parish and place of worship. That is natural, but please do return to the beginning to read the rest afterwards. Although we need to streamline our structures and make them more effective, what is most important for our future is in the first part of this document.



DEANERIES

(from 13th September 2004)

Although many lay people see little value in the deanery except for their clergy, it remains a key structure for enabling clergy and people to work together on a local basis (see page 27).

Further reflection during Deanery Meetings in the Spring and Summer of 2004 has led to the following changes in our current deaneries.

Bury St Edmunds Deanery

This Deanery will remain as it was, but with the addition of Hadleigh. Some deanery activity will be done in the three main clusters rather than at deanery level.

Cambridge Deanery

There will be no change to this deanery, but in much of its working, especially regarding pastoral planning and lay participation, it will operate as two 'sub-deaneries' or large clusters:

- (a) Cambridge city parishes (OLEM; St Philip Howard; St Laurence), Ely and Sawston
- (b) Buckden, Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neot's

Coastal Deanery

This Deanery will remain as it was, but with the addition of Poringland.

Ipswich Deanery

This Deanery will remain as it was, except that Hadleigh will move to the Bury St Edmunds Deanery.

King's Lynn & Norwich Deaneries

Three Deaneries are to be formed from the previous King's Lynn and Norwich Deaneries.

- (a) Poringland will move from the Norwich Deanery to the Coastal Deanery.
- (b) Holy Apostles, Earlham, is to be integrated with the Cathedral; Burnham Market has already been integrated with Walsingham.
- (c) Because it is clustering with Swaffham, Dereham will move from the Norwich to the King's Lynn Deanery.
- (d) A new North Norfolk Deanery will be formed from the parishes of Cromer, Fakenham, North Walsham (now with Hoveton), Sheringham and Walsingham.

Peterborough Deanery

This Deanery will remain as it was.



As a result of these changes, the diocese will have eight rather than seven deaneries.

Bury St Edmund's Deanery (St Edmund)

Brandon; Bury St Edmunds; Clare; Diss; Hadleigh; Haverhill; Newmarket; Stowmarket; Sudbury; Thetford

Cambridge Deanery (St Andrew)

Buckden; OLEM, Cambridge; St Laurence, Cambridge; St Philip Howard, Cambridge; Ely; Huntingdon; St Ives; St Neot's; Sawston.

Coastal Deanery (St Peter)

Beccles; Bungay; Gorleston; Lowestoft; Poringland; Southwold; Great Yarmouth.

Ipswich Deanery (St Edward)

Aldeburgh; Felixstowe; St James, Ipswich; St Mark, Ipswich; St Mary, Ipswich; St Mary Magdalen, Ipswich; St Pancras, Ipswich; Woodbridge.

King's Lynn Deanery (St Wilfrid)

Dereham, Downham Market, Hunstanton, King's Lynn, Swaffham; Wisbech.

Norwich Deanery (St Felix)

Costessey; St John's Cathedral, Norwich; St George's, Norwich; Wymondham.

North Norfolk Deanery

(name to be chosen)

Cromer; Fakenham; North Walsham; Sheringham; Walsingham.

Peterborough Deanery (St Hugh)

March; St Peter & All Souls, Peterborough; Our Lady of Lourdes & St Oswald, Peterborough; St Luke, Peterborough; Sacred Heart, Bretton; St Anthony's, Peterborough (Italian Mission); Polish Mission, Peterborough; Whittlesey.



PARISH CHANGES (for change in 2004)

- (1) The current parish of **Holy Apostles, Earlham** is to be integrated as a distinct community within the Cathedral Parish, and served from there (from 13th September 2004).
- (2) The former parish of **Burnham Market** has already been integrated as a distinct community within the parish of Walsingham, and is now served from there. The priest's house is available for an active retired priest who could celebrate Mass for the community and share in pastoral care without the burden of administration. Alternatively, a lay administrator or a deacon could live there. Whoever takes up residence, however, needs to be ready to allow the main room to be used for parish gatherings.
- (3) The current parish of **North Walsham** is being expanded to include the part of St George's, Norwich, centred on St Helen's Church in Hoveton. It will be a parish with three places of worship: the parish church at North Walsham, and the churches at Aylsham and Hoveton. This will enable St George's parish to function with just one priest when necessary. This change is to take place in September 2004. Masses in North Walsham and Hoveton will need to be reduced and the times adjusted. As a short-term measure, priests from the Cathedral and St George's will assist with Sunday Masses until St Helen's Church can be expanded or another solution found. Parish boundaries will need to be redrawn.

- (4) **Watton** is to be transferred to Swaffham parish. Parish boundaries will need to be redrawn. (September 2004)
- (5) **Quidenham** is to return to Diss parish to which it originally belonged. Sunday Mass at Quidenham is dependent on the continuance of the Carmel there. Mass times in Diss & Quidenham should be harmonised. Parish boundaries will need to be redrawn. (September 2004)
- (6) **Hadleigh parish** has a total Mass attendance which would all fit into one Mass in the parish church in Hadleigh, and yet there are currently three Masses in three different places of worship each weekend (Hadleigh, Nayland and Withermarsh Green). There is naturally a strong attachment to St Edmund's in Withermarsh Green because of its Catholic heritage, but it is not in a centre of population. Strong views have been expressed and heard, but the process of clustering and the need for neighbouring priests to 'supply' for each other requires that the number of Masses and places of worship in Hadleigh parish be reduced to two (and possibly eventually to one). From the beginning of 2005, there will be only two Masses in Hadleigh parish. **Withermarsh Green** will no longer have Mass every weekend. We very much hope to retain the church for occasional celebrations of Mass and special events, preserving a long Catholic heritage and ensuring care for the graveyard. Mass times will need to be coordinated with neighbouring parishes, especially Sudbury.
- (7) In St Philip Howard parish, Cambridge, Mass will no longer be celebrated each weekend in the Anglican churches in **Fulbourn and Linton**. These two Masses will be replaced by an extra Mass at St Philip Howard. (September 2004)
- (8) Mass will no longer be celebrated weekly at **Stanground** (*All Souls', Peterborough*), **Lynford** (*Thetford*) or **Bowthorpe** (*Costessey*). Occasional Masses may be possible. (Summer 2004)

- (9) A new church is to be built at **Sawston** on the understanding that weekly Mass will no longer be celebrated in the Anglican churches at Hauxton and Great Shelford once the new church is built. The new church must be able to accommodate all at a single Mass.
- (10) **Any new or replacement churches to be built in the diocese will require the building to be large enough to accommodate the entire Mass attendance at a single Mass.**



PARISH CHANGES

(for gradual change over the next few years)

The responses to 'Forward & Outward Together' have emphasised the need to be careful to preserve as fully as possible our diocesan service of rural communities. Our large towns/cities, however, offer possibilities for reducing the number of parishes and coordinating the times of Sunday Masses, not only to cope with fewer priests but also to create a better sense of Catholic community and mission. Ipswich and Peterborough deaneries in particular have given much thought to such possibilities

CAMBRIDGE CITY PARISHES

Cambridgeshire is a fast-growing area, and special care needs to be taken to ensure pastoral care for new developments. The three city parishes, OLEM, St Philip Howard's & St Laurence's, along with Sawston, are asked to explore ways of working together in a more integrated way in their city-wide ministry. The proposed housing developments make it impossible to combine any of the city parishes. Parish boundaries may need adjustment. Chaplaincy provision for the hospital needs to be integrated into any overall plan.

Although OLEM currently serves a large number of outlying Mass centres, that is dependent on the number of priests currently resident there, a number which is likely to decrease. However desirable it may be to maintain most of those Masses, it is unlikely to remain viable to do so. OLEM needs to develop a strategy to cope with this in a phased way. It also needs to be kept in mind that Sawston (with one Mass) may one day need to be served from Cambridge.

IPSWICH TOWN PARISHES

- St Pancras & St Mary Magdalen's parishes could be combined into a single parish (with one mass at St Mary Magdalen's and two at St Pancras).
- The deanery is to give further thought to proposals for the future of Holy Family Church, Kesgrave. For the time being, it will remain part of St Mary's parish. Further suggestions include combination of Kesgrave with St James, and the possibility of linking St James with Felixstowe. All these options need to be explored further in the light of housing developments over the next few years.
- Although the present arrangements at St Mark's will continue for the foreseeable future, any future re-alignment of parishes in Ipswich will require a serious reassessment of the viability of Sunday Mass at Capel St Mary and Brantham.
- The Vigil Mass at the Royal Hospital school will eventually be discontinued and any Catholic pupils transported to Mass in St Mark's parish.

Chaplaincy provision for the hospitals and developing university needs to be integrated into any overall plan.

NORWICH CITY PARISHES

With the changes involving Holy Apostles, Earlham and St Helen's, Hoveton, both St John's Cathedral parish and St George's parish will already be 'mini-clusters' of three churches each (the Cathedral with Earlham & Lakenham; St George's with Hellesdon & Thorpe). The Saturday Mass at Bowthorpe ended in June 2004. The number and times of Masses at the Cathedral require radical review in the light of pastoral need rather than the number of priests available – if there is one church in the diocese where one Sunday Mass would be most certainly possible one day, this is it! With fewer Masses, the priests at the cathedral would be even more available for support in other parts of the diocese.

PETERBOROUGH CITY PARISHES

Peterborough Deanery has given much thought to the possibility of reducing from the current five city parishes to either three or eventually one. The deanery has opted to move towards the creation of three new parishes with maximum sharing of personnel and resources. The three-parish model is based on the following re-structuring:

- (a) St Oswald's and Sacred Heart, Bretton
- (b) All Souls and Our Lady of Lourdes (with the Italian Mission fully integrated)
- (c) St Luke's with Hampton, Yaxley and Sawtry.

There will need to be phased progress towards such changes, alongside the development of city-wide ministry and pooling of resources. A single city parish remains an option for the future which may emerge as a natural consequence of increased cooperation. The plan presumes that the Italian Mission will be sensitively integrated into the remaining parishes if and when they do not have their own Italian priest.

There will no longer be weekly Mass at Stanground. The position of Yaxley is being reviewed in the light of developments at Hampton. Parish boundaries will need to be redrawn.

Whittlesey may need to be included in long-term plans for the Peterborough city churches. The worshipping communities at Chatteris (March parish) and Ramsey (Whittlesey parish) will need careful attention, perhaps in liaison with Ely.

Chaplaincy provision for the hospital and prison needs to be integrated into any overall plan.



PARISHES TO COMBINE

(only as this ever becomes necessary)

If the overall number of active priests in the diocese continues to fall, we will need to combine parishes in some way so that one or two priests can serve a number of churches. Our present and future retired priests would play a vital role in such a process.

Several combined parishes would inevitably involve the ending of weekly Mass in some places of worship, and a reduction in the number of Masses in the main churches. Some of those parishes would perhaps be served by one parish priest, but assisted on an informal basis by retired priests living in the parish.

If any such changes become necessary, it may not be possible to continue weekly Mass at various churches and other Mass centres. We need to be aware, however, of problems which could arise from closure of such centres and limited space in the main church.

Besides the proposals for the city parishes outlined above, the following parishes (in no significant order) are the most likely for the first stage of such a process. Others may follow.

- (1) Cromer & Sheringham
- (2) Dereham & Swaffham
Any eventual combination would involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing Mass at Watton.
- (3) Beccles & Bungay (the current Benedictine parishes), perhaps eventually with Poringland; Harleston could perhaps become part of Diss parish.
Any eventual combination would involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing weekly Mass at Gillingham.
- (4) Gorleston & Great Yarmouth
Such a combination will make it difficult to retain both the Mass centres at Acle and Caister-on-Sea.
- (5) Instead of 4 above, possibly Gorleston, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft served by two priests at first rather than the current three.
Any eventual combination involving Lowestoft will make it difficult to retain St Nicholas, Pakefield; Acle; Caister-on-Sea.

- (5) Fakenham & Walsingham
Such a combination would depend on the continued presence of large numbers of active retired priests in the parish of Walsingham, which already includes Blakeney, Burnham Market & Wells.
- (6) Brandon/Mildenhall & Thetford
- (7) March & Wisbech (the current Rosminian parishes).
- (8) Instead of 7 above, March, Wisbech & Whittlesey could be served by two priests rather than the current three. Chatteris might be served from Ely.
- (9) St Mary Magdalen & St Pancras, Ipswich.
- (10) Clare & Haverhill
- (11) Hadleigh & Sudbury
Any eventual combination would involve a serious reassessment of the viability of retaining Nayland.
- (12) Instead of 9 & 10 above, possibly a team of two or three priests covering three or all four parishes.



PARISH CLUSTERS

(for immediate implementation)

Besides the basic Deanery Structure, most parishes will be grouped in 'clusters' of two, three or four, and will reach decisions together on times for weekend Masses, joint events and sharing resources. Especially in rural Deaneries, such clusters may be a better structure for organising consultative bodies for lay people, etc.

There are two main aims in such 'clustering'. Firstly, even those parishes which are likely to remain such in the foreseeable future will benefit both themselves and others by closely working together, sharing resources, etc. Secondly, in many cases the process of 'clustering' is but a first step towards eventual combination into a single parish: the more closely that parishes work together now, the less traumatic will be the eventual combination. Within 'clusters' of more than two parishes, it will soon emerge which combinations provide the most likely options for the future. For further thoughts on 'clusters', please see page 28f.

Although any decisions need to be flexible and open to review and change, the following 'clusters' are to begin from September 2004, and are now seen as an essential part of diocesan life. One of the new roles of the Dean is to monitor the progress of such clusters within his deanery.

BURY ST EDMUNDS DEANERY

- (1) Clare, Haverhill, Hadleigh & Sudbury (Stour Valley). Within this cluster, closer links should be developed between (1) Clare & Haverhill, (2) Hadleigh & Sudbury.
- (2) Brandon, Diss & Thetford
- (3) Bury St Edmund's, Newmarket & Stowmarket

CAMBRIDGE DEANERY

- (1) Cambridge city parishes & Sawston
This developing clustering will involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing all the Mass centres served by OLEM.
- (2) Buckden, Huntingdon, St Ives & St Neot's

COASTAL DEANERY

- (1) Beccles, Bungay, Poringland & Southwold
This developing clustering will inevitably involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing weekly Mass at Gillingham and Loddon..
- (2) Gorleston, Great Yarmouth & Lowestoft
This developing clustering will inevitably involve a serious reassessment of the viability of retaining St Nicholas, Pakefield; Acle; Caister-on-Sea.

KING'S LYNN DEANERY

- (1) Dereham & Swaffham (with Watton)
- (2) Downham Market, King's Lynn & Hunstanton (centred on King's Lynn)

- (3) March, Whittlesey & Wisbech (cross-deanery cluster)
Wisbech will stay in King's Lynn Deanery for the time being, but may eventually be moved to the Peterborough Deanery.

IPSWICH DEANERY

- (1) Aldeburgh & Woodbridge (although long distances – 17 miles may make this difficult)
- (2) Ipswich town parishes and Felixstowe will generally work together more closely, and continue to explore together the most viable clusters. The number and times of Masses in Ipswich is being reviewed, alongside church capacity.
This developing clustering will involve a serious reassessment of the viability of continuing weekly Mass at Capel St Mary and the Royal Hospital School.
- (3) Already agreed is the clustering of St Mary Magdalen's & St Pancras. Sunday Masses are being rationalised.

NORTH NORFOLK DEANERY

- (1) Cromer, Sheringham & North Walsham
- (2) Fakenham & Walsingham

NORWICH DEANERY

- (1) Cathedral, St George's & Costessey

PETERBOROUGH DEANERY

- (1) Peterborough city parishes
- (2) March, Whittlesey & Wisbech (cross-deanery Rosminian cluster)
Wisbech will stay in King's Lynn Deanery for the time being, but may eventually be moved to the Peterborough Deanery. Whittlesey may eventually be better clustered with the Peterborough city parishes. The Catholic communities at Chatteris (March parish) and Ramsey (Whittlesey parish) are part of this cluster, but this may eventually need to be reviewed.

APPENDIX 1: Towards One Mass

If the Mass is to remain at the very centre of our Catholic lives, as it must, we will have to be flexible about where and when we go to Mass.

Many factors need to be kept in mind as we reduce the number of places of worship and of Masses in each place, especially in our rural communities. Environmental concerns are important: it makes sense for one priest to travel to the people rather than for many people to travel long distances (rather than just a few miles). This would be better also for people with no transport of their own.

People will find it more difficult to get to Mass if the number of Masses is reduced: people without transport, families with small children, people with Sunday commitments – the less choice of Mass, the more difficult things become. And of course we understand how attached people become to a place of worship, especially if it is part of our Catholic heritage, or their families helped to build the church, or they have worshipped there since childhood.

But this is not necessarily a realistic solution. As the number of priests declines, and parishes are combined, those priests will be required to celebrate Mass in more than one main church. This will only be possible if less Masses are celebrated in each place, and smaller places of worship are closed.

We also need to keep in mind the need for neighbouring priests to 'supply' for each other: simply because a priest is allowed to celebrate a maximum of three Sunday Masses does not mean that he should be doing so unless there is real pastoral need.

Especially when they are close to another church or away from centres of population, we will have to rethink our use of churches whether they are ancient or very modern. If the English Reformation had not happened, we would probably now be making many of our great medieval churches redundant all over East Anglia.

Some communities with Sunday morning Masses will be asked to change to a Sunday evening or Saturday evening. Whatever people think of 'one Sunday mass' as an ideal, reducing the number of Masses and changing

Mass times across the diocese will be essential precisely in order to ensure Mass for as many people as possible.

Neighbouring parishes are going to have to start working more closely together now, and gradually adjust their Mass times so that eventually one priest can serve both parishes. This will happen in quite a few of our parishes over the next few years. It is surely best to prepare for that now, and move in stages towards it, rather than wait until a parish suddenly realises they will no longer have a priest. Imagine, for example, two neighbouring parishes (perhaps 6 or 7 miles apart, or closer in an urban setting), each with a Saturday evening Mass and a 9.30 Mass on Sunday morning. It makes sense for one parish to have a Saturday evening Mass and the other a Sunday evening Mass, and to stagger the Sunday morning Masses so that one is at 9.00 and the other at 11.00. That would mean that each parish priest could cover or 'supply' for the other when ill.

There are places in the diocese which need two Masses because of the small size of the church, but where that just will not be possible in the future. We need to explore radical solutions if we want to keep our Mass.

- (a) A few churches could be **enlarged** so that two congregations could fit into one Mass.
- (b) In others, we may need to abandon our cherished small church and **move** Mass to somewhere larger (perhaps the Anglican or Methodist church nearby, or the main Catholic Church several miles away).
- (c) Another possibility is to sell the current church site, and to build a **new church** on a more accessible and central site elsewhere, with more parking. Any new church built in our diocese must be large enough to accommodate the whole Mass attendance at a single Mass, with room for future growth.

Local parish communities need to explore such possibilities with creativity and adaptability. Our situation will increasingly demand that we reduce the number of Masses precisely in order to ensure we have as many Masses as we can with fewer priests to celebrate them.

APPENDIX 2: A PARISH LINKS SCHEME (one parish as an example)

Inspired by the missionary example of St Augustine of Canterbury, we decided as a parish family to reach out more positively and fruitfully to all Catholics (especially those who do not regularly come to Mass) and to those other people of our town who have yet to respond to the Good News of Jesus Christ, or who are in special need (the poor, the lonely, the sick, the bereaved, etc). We have established a simple skeleton structure of small neighbourhood groupings or 'clusters' across the whole parish which are open to development according to the needs and wishes of each local area.

- (1) All known Catholic homes in the parish are allocated to local neighbourhood 'clusters', ideally between 10 – 15 homes in each. This is to be an informal and flexible structure, a living expression of communion and pastoral care which is in no way intended to be intrusive or threatening.
- (2) In each cluster area, we try to find one or two people (perhaps a married couple) suitable to be Parish Link People. Their role is to get to know the Catholic households in their clusters, providing personal points of contact between the parish centre and each household in an appropriately sensitive way, carefully respecting the wishes of each person or family.
- (3) An annual meeting of these Link People provides a valuable forum for discussion on the state and future of the parish. This usually takes place after an evening Mass at which all Link People are renewed in their commissioning.
- (4) It is recognised that putting this project into operation will be patchy and slow. It will work in some areas, but perhaps not in others. It may not be possible to find Link People for every area. Patience and perseverance will be required.
- (5) When Catholic newcomers move into the parish, their names and addresses are given to the Link Person in their area, who will visit them in person, inform them of other Mass-going Catholics in that area and of aspects of parish life, and encourage other local Catholics to make themselves known to and welcome the new person or family. This ministry of welcome is a key role of the Link Person. 'Welcome cards' are provided for them to deliver to anyone moving into the neighbourhood, whatever their faith.
- (6) Link People may be able to assist with general outreach, distributing leaflets in person, making the clergy and others aware of local people in need, giving support to the bereaved, sick, housebound, etc. A special information sheet will be sent from the parish office when people in an area need special support and care. Some Link People may be able to deliver the weekly parish newsletter to each 'lapsed' Catholic household.
- (7) Several times a year, especially in Advent and Lent, materials will be provided for delivery to every Catholic household in each area. Link People are asked to deliver these in person, contacting residents and checking the information on the list of Catholic homes.
- (8) In some areas, it may be possible to arrange social activities, reflection groups, celebration of House Masses, etc, but this will be the natural fruit of a gradual weaving together of people's lives rather than a structure imposed or encouraged from outside.
- (9) Link People may be able to do things with neighbouring 'clusters': e.g. organising a House Mass to which all Catholics in two or three clusters are invited.
- (10) None of this is intended to undermine the pastoral responsibility of priests, deacons, or of the care organisations of the parish (Welfare Officer, SVP, Bereavement Group, etc).
- (11) We are trying to move towards a system whereby Holy Communion is normally taken to the sick and housebound by a Lay Minister of Communion within that area.
- (12) Special care should be given by the clergy of the parish to maintaining good contact with Parish Link People, as key servants of the unity and well-being of the parish.
- (13) It may be beneficial to develop e-mail contact within each area, especially for reminding Catholics of key events, and perhaps for sending the weekly newsletter.

APPENDIX 3: Youth Masses

Some guidelines from Bishop Michael

As part of our diocesan programme to help our young people to experience a greater sense of welcome and belonging in our churches, and to become more fully involved in the life and worship of the Catholic Church, I have strongly encouraged deaneries and parishes to organise regular youth Masses. Several deaneries and parishes have already done so with much success.

But what is a 'Youth Mass'? Firstly, a Sunday Youth Mass will not be for young people only, but a community Mass with particular focus on the young people and participation by them.

Secondly, many people seem to think a Youth Mass is simply Mass as usual, but with livelier music accompanied by guitars rather than organ.

Careful choice of music is a vital dimension of any liturgical planning, and this certainly applies to the celebration of Mass with young people. The same is true of how the music is played: young people do not respond well to hymns played more slowly than they are meant to be!

But a 'Youth Mass' is far more than a Mass with young people present and a few guitars replacing the organ.

A Youth Mass aims at full, active, conscious participation by the young people present. First and foremost, that means spiritual participation, prayerfulness, openness to the presence of God. Such a Mass provides an opportunity for young people to express their worship to God and communicate with him in a way with which they feel comfortable.

The creation of the right atmosphere is important there. The Taize community is one of many experiences from which we can learn. Taize has developed a form of liturgy much loved by many thousands of young people from across the world. This involves a simple setting, careful use of subdued lighting and colour, candlelight, meditative songs, short Scripture readings and long periods of silence. The prayer at Taize often seems to touch the heart (rather than merely the emotions) of young people. (For more on learning from Taize, click my article 'The air you breathe at Taize' on the Taize website – www.taize.fr/en/index.htm - under 'About Taize' on the right hand of the web-page).

The priest's homily is also a key factor. It needs to be carefully directed to teenagers and their concerns. It could well be developed by the priest in dialogue with a group of young people beforehand.

The most important people to ask about good 'Youth Masses' are not well-meaning adults but the young people themselves. The monthly Youth Mass in my last parish was developed at the request of the Parish Youth Council (it was their unanimous Number One priority at their first meeting) and in ongoing discussion with them as to what they wanted. Any parish planning to have a Youth Mass should arrange a meeting of teenagers and ask them what they want. Small groups feeding back into a general discussion works best, in my experience.

Inevitably some of them will come up with 'wild and wacky' ideas which are liturgically unacceptable. Any Youth Mass must operate within the official liturgical norms of the Catholic Church (for example, a lay person – young or old - may not read the Gospel at Mass). But often the young people themselves are the first to weed out unacceptable ideas. They are not after the 'wild and wacky', but a liturgy in which they are fully involved and feel they belong, and which touches and nourishes their spiritual depths with the presence of God.

Despite the common perception, young people have a great sense of spirituality, and respond well when offered the opportunity for prayer and reflection. Taize shows us that young people can spend five minutes in silent prayer without much guidance or direction. Every Youth Mass should include at least some time of quiet reflection, inviting God deeper into their lives. The priest can easily create the right atmosphere for this after Communion, perhaps after a meditative and 'quietening' song.

How can young people be as fully involved as possible in such a Mass?

- Welcoming people at the church door and distributing Mass sheets or hymnbooks
- Reading the Scriptures, sometimes in parts (e.g. Narrator, Moses, the People, etc)

- Writing and reading the Intercessions
- Taking the Collection
- The Presentation of the Gifts
- Acting as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion once commissioned (15+ after being confirmed)
- Forms of drama and mime during one or other Scripture reading (remembering that the Gospel must be read by a deacon or priest)
- Preparing the homily with the priest, with possible drama involvement in the homily
- A brief testimony or talk by young people after the notices and before the blessing
- Preparing artwork for the Mass to decorate the church, illustrate the Scripture readings, express prayer and for use at the Presentation of the Gifts
- Preparing and serving coffee, etc, after Mass

All of this is in addition to the choice of music and music ministry in general. As far as possible, young people should be involved in the choice of music for the Mass, while avoiding the same songs each time.

Forming a good 'Youth Band', at first with sensitive adult support, will enable a good repertoire of liturgical music to be developed. There is an increasing amount of youth-friendly and lively music suitable for Mass, rather than some of the old 'Folk Songs' which have long passed their prime and some modern songs whose theology is sometimes difficult to reconcile with Catholic teaching. Care needs to be taken with the words of songs as well as the tunes. No celebration of Mass is meant to be a concert: liturgical music of any style should aim above all to enhance and enrich the Mass as a time of worship, a time of prayer in community.

There can sometimes be resistance from church musicians to the development of Youth Masses with a very different style of music. Music ministry needs to be as varied as the

musical needs of a community, and there must be room for developing and enlarging the team of people responsible for music in the liturgy. But established church musicians can contribute greatly by supporting this development, whatever their personal musical preferences, and giving others the freedom to move in new directions.

Both the Diocesan Director of Music and the Director of our Diocesan Youth Service can give details of music resources. The latter is also happy to work with parishes and deaneries in the organisation of Youth Masses.

The songs of Taize are often popular with young people when used properly: they will not respond to the same short song being sung 20 times without harmonies, instruments, etc.

Many young people have tremendous musical talent: singing, instrumentals, and even composition. These should be fully used. Ideally, a music group for a Youth Mass should be primarily composed of young people, rather than a group of adults playing what they think young people will like.

The more young people see other young people actively involved in the Mass in all kinds of different ways, the more they will feel they and their peers truly belong. In the end, the purpose is not to give them a 'liturgical high', but to draw them deeper into a living relationship with God within the life of his Church.

A well-organised 'Youth Mass' in which young people are fully involved can be an inspiration not only to the young people themselves, but also to the rest of the parish family who take part in the Mass. Many of our older parishioners themselves long for a liturgy which is both more alive and more prayerful. In my last parish, quite a few of our 'senior citizens' opted for the Youth Mass because they knew it would be uplifting for themselves, and because they were so pleased to see young people at the heart of parish life.

a future not our own

We accomplish in our lifetime
only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise
that is God's work.
Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No programme
accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives
includes everything.

That is what we are about.
We plant a seed that will one day grow.
We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations
that will need further development.
We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation
in realising that.
This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,
a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace
to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference between
the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Archbishop Oscar Romero