
“EVEN THE WINDS AND THE SEAS OBEY HIM”
(MT 8:23-27)



*An invitation
from
Bishop Fintan Gavin*

Diocese of Cork and Ross

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Since I became your Bishop, the most common question people ask me is: why are there so many changes in the Church and in their parish? This question shows that we are living in a time of uncertainty and change. Sometimes, we might feel like the disciples who fished all night but caught nothing (Luke 5:5).

As a faith community, I suggest we address these concerns with our faith in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit. Christ is always with us, especially during storms and moments of doubt; He calms our fears and calls us to trust in His power (Matt 8:23-27).

Despite these significant changes, many people continue to faithfully support their parishes and priests. Understandably, people are concerned about their parish's future. Many have a strong attachment to their local church, some worry about the sustainability of their preferred Mass times, and some communities miss having a resident priest. As I visit parishes, I meet parents and grandparents who lament that their children or grandchildren are no longer active in the faith community.

Our priests are also living through these unprecedented changes. I recognize and appreciate the selfless generosity of our priests as they meet increasing demands to provide sacramental and pastoral care. From my conversations with priests, I understand the challenges of serving multiple faith communities simultaneously, which can make direct contact with parishioners difficult. I appreciate how our priests have embraced new ways of working together and collaboratively with people in the Families of Parishes.

I want to thank the older and retired priests who continue to serve in our Families of Parishes. We are also blessed by priests from overseas who have made great sacrifices to serve our communities and chaplaincies in the Diocese.

Religious men and women have made significant contributions to our Diocese. Although their roles have changed greatly, I acknowledge the essential role they continue to play.

Looking to the future and considering our current situation, we believe the Holy Spirit is guiding us to be faithful and courageous in new ways so that we can carry on the mission of the Church.

Rooted in our baptism, we continue to be nourished by the sacraments, especially the Sunday Eucharist.

How can we make baptism the gateway into life in our community?

How can priests and parishioners prepare for and celebrate the Sunday Eucharist so that we are nourished and strengthened to tell others about Christ?

These questions will naturally make us think about how and where we will celebrate the Sunday Eucharist.

Although many young people receive their First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and are supported by their families, teachers and priests, the impact of these sacraments in our faith community is not always evident.

How can we, as parishioners, priests, and teachers, ensure that these sacraments help our young people encounter Christ and energize the faith community?

It is encouraging to see so many people volunteering their talents, gifts, and time in various roles within the faith community. Through our baptism, each of us has the responsibility and the right to help build a vibrant community of disciples for our time. The Office for Mission and Ministry, Youth Ministry and Communications Coordinator, and the introduction of the Families of Parishes play important roles in supporting these communities.

It is clear that the Church of the present and the future will have an enhanced role for lay leaders. To support this, we plan to create a Diocesan Pastoral Centre, which will also include the services currently in the Diocesan Office. I hope this will be a valuable resource for training and supporting people living out their baptismal calling and for ongoing support of our priests.

“Young people are the now and the future of the Church”
(c.f. Pope Francis – *Christus Vivit*, #64).

We have seen positive initiatives like the Connect events, Sycamore and Alpha groups, Youth 2000, and the growth of the UCC chaplaincy, in collaboration with FOCUS missionaries, supporting young people in their faith. These young people find friendship, formation, support, and meaning in these groups and gatherings.

At the local and Families of Parishes level, how can we engage and invite young people to participate in our communities?

We can only answer these questions and challenges together. The Holy Spirit guides us as we listen to one another. To respond to the mission of the future, we need a period of prayer and listening. Each Family of Parishes will be invited to participate, priests and people, in gatherings focused on prayer, listening and discernment.

Meetings with priests have already been held to prepare for these gatherings, and planning meetings with representatives from all the Families of Parishes will be held in November. There will also be engagement with schools, chaplaincies, apostolic groups, and religious communities.

To keep everything rooted in God, this process needs to be supported by prayer. I invite everyone in the Diocese to commit to praying, both personally and in groups, so that the Holy Spirit will guide everything we do.

Whether you are a parent preparing a child for baptism, a young person preparing for Holy Communion or Confirmation, a family dealing with loss or grief, a student navigating school or college, a couple setting up a new home, someone busy with work, a person struggling with life, or someone in the later years of life, you, along with our priests, deacons and religious, belong to this faith community. Your prayer and participation are essential as we listen together to where God is calling us to be His Church in Cork and Ross in our time.

As disciples of the Risen Christ, our time of prayer and discernment will help lead us to a hope-filled future for our faith communities as we play our part in building the Kingdom of God in our time and place.

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