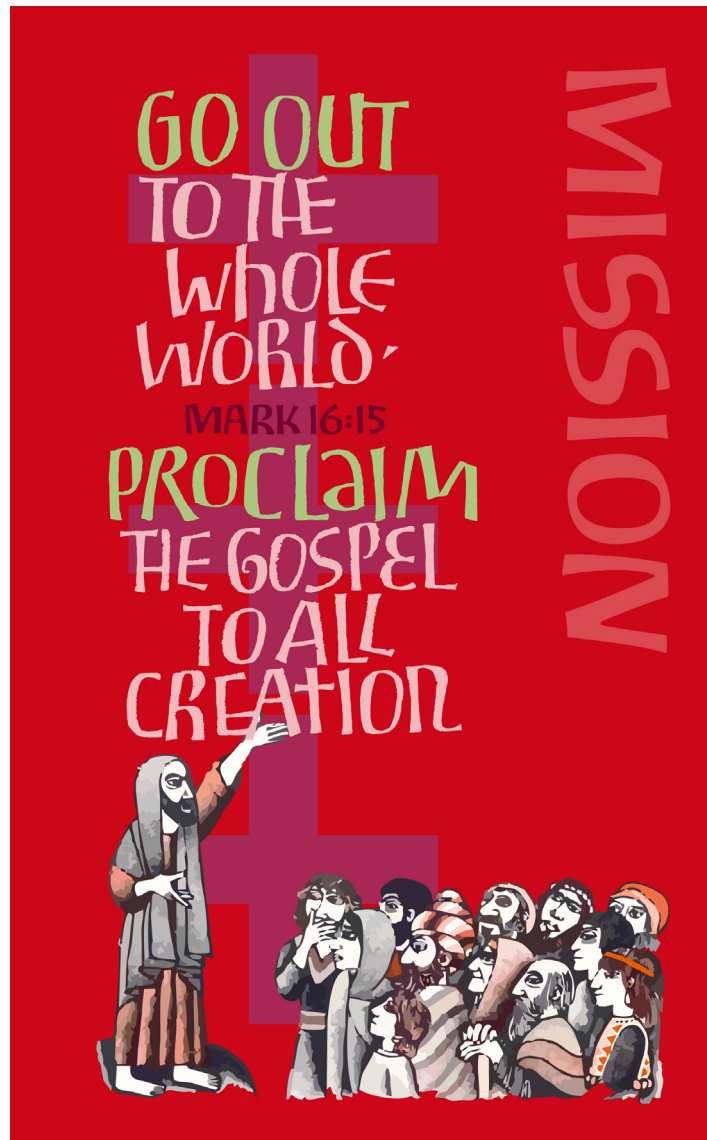


MISSION

2017-2018



A FUTURE
FULL OF HOPE
CLIFTON DIOCESE



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Acknowledgements

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OUR BISHOP'S VISION

The Church of Clifton
is called to be a people
who believe in Christ,
who celebrate Christ,
and who live the way of Christ.

The Church is created by God
to live, not for itself,
but for others;
to be a people who share
in the mission of Christ,
to proclaim the Kingdom
and to make disciples
so that the world will be transformed
according to God's plan.

Our Parishes and Communities
should be places
where Christ is celebrated,
shared, proclaimed and lived,
where everyone
is welcomed and valued,
and all have a sense of responsibility
for the life of the community and the world.

We are called to be disciples
who not only know about Jesus
but also come to know him in prayer.
Our liturgies
should be celebrated in such a way
that Christ's word is heard,
his presence known,
and which are so connected to our lives
that we joyfully
take up the command
'Go in peace glorifying the Lord by your life'.

MISSION

COMMUNION

PRAYER



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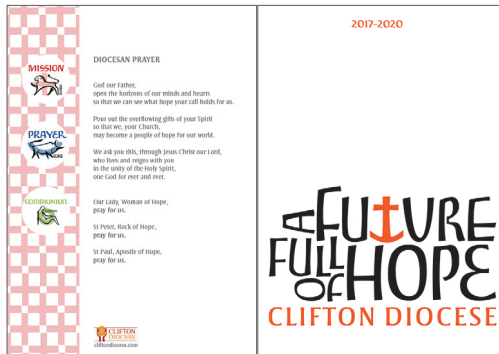
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INTRODUCTION

A Future Full of Hope

This booklet should be read in the light of the document 'A Future Full of Hope' which gives us a roadmap for the next three years. It was presented to the people and communities of our diocese by Bishop Declan on 28 October 2017. It can be downloaded from cliftondiocese.com.



It offers an overview of the next three years that will enable us to root ourselves once again in the Bishop's threefold vision of

Mission	2017-18
Prayer	2018-19
Communion	2019-20

The Gospels of each liturgical year will accompany us and support us in all that we do so that, Sunday by Sunday, returning to the source, which is Christ and his Gospel, we come to appreciate all that we are being called to be for our world and for others.

St Mark will anchor our reflection and our activity in Mission
St Luke will shape and fashion us in Prayer.
St Matthew will cultivate our sense of Communion.

The first of these three years focuses us on Mission and seeks to unfold the Bishop's vision that we be a people **'who share in the mission of Christ, to proclaim the kingdom and to make disciples'**.

There are two main parts to this resource:

Part One provides three reflections - one on discipleship, one on mission and one on the proclamation of the Gospel - with questions for personal use and for group discussion. It is intended that the study of this document will lead to a deepening of our missionary spirit.

Part Two presents some of the events and liturgies that are taking place in our Diocese during this year. There is also a section on the meaning of Christian hope, a guide to how to use this resource, and some further reading suggestions.



The Year of Mission 2017-2018

‘Jesus now came up into the hills and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; and they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach’ (Mark 3:13-14)

The origins of the Church can be found in the calling of these twelve who were to be his closest companions. Jesus continues to choose disciples who will form the communion of life which is his Church. Jesus began by choosing the Twelve. However, the Greek word here is not the word ‘appointed’ or ‘instituted’ that we have in most translations; the word used in the Gospel is ‘made’ or ‘created’. Cardinal Christoph Schonborn writes,

‘Mark says that he created the Twelve. The expression is the same as the one used on the first page of the Bible for the creation of the world. Jesus performs an act of creation, a new creation. God creates them, as he creates the world. He creates the world out of nothing and the calling of the Twelve is something entirely new.’¹

God intends the Church to be more than an institution, he creates it to be the place of his active presence in our world. Just as God created all that exists so he also created the Church to be the place where re-creation begins.

God continues to create the Church. God continues to breathe life into it and constantly builds up the Church through word and sacrament. Though the Church has a definite form, the creativity of God’s Holy Spirit means the Church is able to adapt to changing times and situations. The Lord is creating the Church anew in our time. The Church is not a static reality, it is the living Body of Christ; the presence of Christ in our world.

God promises us ‘a future full of hope’². While in its essence the Church has remained the same for 2000 years yet its outward form has adapted and renewed itself over and over again. We can learn much from the past but our greatest lesson is that the Lord never abandons his Church. In the Book of Revelation Jesus says to the Church “Behold I am making all things new: Write this down because these words are faithful and true.”³ The Lord continues to make all things new and he calls us to work with him in this act of creation.

‘Imagination’, the novelist Henry Miller wrote, ‘is the voice of daring. If there is anything godlike about God, it is that. He dared to imagine everything.’⁴ Imagination is the seed of hope and God is calling us to work with him in imagining the future because, in our times too, God continues to create his Church.

The Lord calls us to share in his creative imagination so that we may respond to the needs of our times.



1 Christoph Cardinal Schonborn, *Jesus' School of Life*, Ignatius Press, 2016. p32

2 Jeremiah 29: 11- 13

3 Revelation 21:5

4 Henry Miller, *The Tropic of Capricorn* (1939)

Jesus 'is always able to renew our lives and our communities, and even if the Christian message has known periods of darkness and ecclesial weakness, it will never grow old. Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world. Every form of authentic evangelisation is always "new".'⁵

We are called to missionary creativity.

God is still doing what Mark speaks of in his Gospel, he is creating disciples who will be sent out. We are called to be missionary disciples who return to the 'source' who is Christ and to the freshness of his Gospel in order that God will create his Church anew. The Church that God is creating may not be exactly the Church that we envisage but we are called to co-operate with God to bring about the community of disciples that he is bringing into being.

Pope Francis says that the Lord is calling us to be a community of missionary disciples. He writes:

*'I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation.'*⁶

This Year of Mission in our Diocese of Clifton is intended as a spring-board for our parishes and communities so that we may reflect on ways in which we can grow in discipleship and so become more actively effective in our mission, especially to the poor and to those on the peripheries of our society.

The prayer to the Holy Spirit can be made our own. We pray that the Lord will create within each of us the heart of a disciple so that the earth may be renewed.

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created,
and you shall renew the face of the earth.

⁵ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 11 hereafter (EG)
⁶ EG 27



Evangelisation - the essential work of the Church

Since the Second Vatican Council the Church has been calling for us to place an ever-greater emphasis on evangelisation. Beginning with his visit to Poland in 1979, St John Paul II called for a 'New Evangelisation'. But what exactly do we mean by evangelisation? Sometimes we can use the words 'evangelisation', 'mission', 'outreach', 'evangelism' almost interchangeably, as if they all mean the same thing. While all these terms somehow overlap and inform each other they do each mean something slightly different. Even Church teaching and documents place different nuances and emphases on what evangelisation means.

The document which has been pivotal in our understanding of evangelisation is *Evangelii Nuntiandi* issued by Blessed Paul VI in 1975. Pope Francis has said: '*Evangelii Nuntiandi* — to my mind is the greatest pastoral document that has ever been written to this day'.⁷ And of course, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is the episcopal motto of Bishop Declan. (A literal translation of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is to 'announce the Good News'. In English, it is titled 'Proclaiming the Gospel').

Evangelisation can sound like one more thing *we have to do*. We catechise, we run the parish finance group, we prepare our children for the sacraments... and then we are called to evangelise. What do we first think of when we hear the call to evangelise? Perhaps we think that we are being asked to stand on street corners and preach the good news or that we should hand out leaflets inviting everyone to come to Church. That would be to truncate the meaning of evangelisation.

What Paul VI reminded us is that **everything** we do should serve the purpose of evangelisation. He taught that evangelisation is not one task among many but is the indispensable work of the Church. Whether we are caring for the sick, being a good neighbour, doing our best to be a good parent or using our talents as best we can in our work, these - and a thousand other things - are the bedrock of true evangelisation. It is what we do and how we act in addition to the explicit proclamation of our faith that will witness to what we believe and so draw others to Christ. This is what Paul VI means when he writes: '*We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelising all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church.*'⁸

He calls us to see that evangelisation is not one more thing the Church does but is the essence of all the activity of the Church. '*Evangelisation is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelise, that is to say in order to preach and to teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection.*'⁹ Evangelisation is more than preaching, more than just witness and service: **everything the Church does is part of the work of evangelisation.**

St John Paul II said that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* remains the Magna Carta of evangelisation and he reminded the Church that by studying this document

⁷ Pope Francis, Address to Participants in the Pilgrimage from the diocese of Brescia, 22 June 2013

⁸ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,¹⁴ hereafter (EN)

⁹ EN 14



we can avoid the pitfalls of overemphasis on one aspect of this complex reality, to the detriment of others.¹⁰

Everything the Church does is called to be at the service of evangelisation. It stops us thinking that we should first organise the Church... after which we can evangelise. We do not organise ourselves and then begin to evangelise – everything we do serves the purpose of evangelisation. The call to evangelise is not necessarily the call to do more but to look in a new way at what we already do. It is the lens through which we can judge all that we do in the Church. We may be called to do more but the greater challenge might be to identify what we should not be doing at all. If what we are doing, as Church, is not at the service of evangelisation why are we doing it? Without wanting to fall into the pitfall of overemphasis that John Paul II warned us about, we offer the following definitions of evangelisation, discipleship, mission and evangelism.

Evangelisation is everything that the Church is called to do in order to engage in the mission of Christ: preaching, teaching, service, prayer, liturgy, witness, proclamation, administration. ‘Evangelisation is a complex process: The renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, apostolic initiative.’¹¹

Of course words and their meanings cannot be adequately disentangled and Pope Francis uses the term ‘**missionary disciple**’ as a new and distinct way of speaking about evangelisation. We no longer say that we are disciples and then missionaries, we are ‘missionary disciples’.

The three aspects of evangelisation on which this booklet focuses are discipleship, mission and evangelism.

Discipleship To be a disciple is to have encountered Christ, to place ourselves in the School of Jesus and allow ourselves to be constantly evangelised. Pope Paul VI writes ‘*the Church is an evangeliser, but she begins by being evangelised herself*’.¹²

Mission Mission is the propulsion that comes from encountering Jesus Christ, from being a disciple. Once we have encountered the Lord he sends us out to be of service to others, especially to the poor and to those on the peripheries.

Evangelism Evangelism is the spoken proclamation of the Gospel, especially the proclamation of the love revealed to us in the saving death and resurrection of Christ. It is often called *the kerygma* – the proclamation. In this booklet we call it ‘the heart of the Gospel’.

In subsequent years we will focus on ‘evangelisation and prayer’ and then ‘evangelisation and communion’.

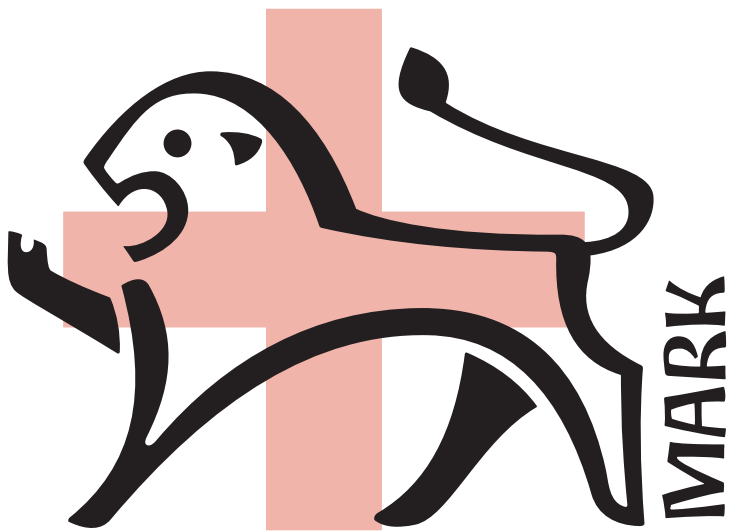
¹⁰ John Paul II, Address to the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, Manila, 15 January 1995

¹¹ EN 24

¹² EN 15



PART ONE



MISSION



DISCIPLESHIP

‘The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes to the end of time”.’¹³

Before his Ascension into heaven Jesus left clear instructions, the eleven were to make disciples and they were to do that by baptising men and women and by teaching them to keep his commands. That is still the Lord’s call to us. In fact, in the New Testament the word disciple occurs two hundred and sixty-nine times while the word Christian is found only three times. So, what do we mean by the word disciple? The word literally means a pupil or someone who is teachable, someone who is willing to be apprenticed to a master. The first disciples were schooled by Jesus over the three years that they were with him. They learnt from his teaching, they witnessed his healing and, of course, they were remade and reformed by the experience of his death and resurrection.

We too are called to place ourselves in the school of Jesus, to become his disciples, to place ourselves in his presence and to listen to his word. Pope Francis writes:

‘I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord” The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms’.¹⁴

So how do we encounter Jesus Christ personally? We encounter Jesus by the simplest of movements toward him, of placing ourselves in his presence and asking for his help. As Pope Francis reminds us ‘he is already there’, Christ is as truly present to us as he was to the very first disciples. After the resurrection, Jesus ascended to the right hand of God the Father in the Kingdom of heaven, not to abandon us but so that his Spirit may fill the whole of creation. There are endless ways in which Christ makes himself present in our world but, first of all, he is present in his Body, which is the Church, and there we can encounter him.

The Second Vatican Council teaches us,

‘Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass... By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when anybody baptises it is really Christ himself who baptises. He is



¹³ Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁴ EG 3

present in his word, since it is He himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).¹⁵

We encounter Christ and grow in our discipleship when we listen to the word of God and when we approach the Sacraments with faith.

Of course, when we say that the Church is the Body of Christ we mean that he is present in his people. Pope Francis writes ‘God’s word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us: “As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40).’¹⁶

We place ourselves in Christ’s presence, we encounter Jesus when we serve, when we welcome and when we see the face of Christ in others.

To be a disciple is to place ourselves in the School of Jesus.

A model for discipleship - St Stephen

A good example of discipleship is the first martyr of the Church, St Stephen. He is presented in the Acts of the Apostles as a model of discipleship.

‘Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God’s right hand. “I can see heaven thrown open” he said “and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”. At this all the members of the council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then they all rushed at him, sent him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul. As they were stoning him, Stephen said in invocation, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and said aloud, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them”, and with these words he fell asleep. Saul approved of the killing.’ (Acts 7:55- 60)

St Stephen displays four marks of a disciple. First, he placed himself at the **service of others**, especially the poor. Second, he is described as **full of ‘faith and the Holy Spirit’**. Third, he is **willing to witness** to his faith, as we see in his speech to the Sanhedrin. Fourth, although he is persecuted, **he forgives** those who kill him.

In other words, having placed himself in the School of Jesus, he becomes like his Master. Stephen allows the Lord to teach him and to mould him. The challenge to us is to place ourselves in the School of Jesus and to allow him to change us so that we too may show those same marks of discipleship. We too are called to show these four marks of a disciple: to witness, to serve the poor, to forgive and to live by faith.



¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7

¹⁶ EN 179

Go make disciples...

Of course, we are called not only to be disciples but to ‘make disciples’. All of our parishes and schools teach and preach the faith but the challenge that Pope Francis gives us is whether our work is actually making disciples. The Directory on Catechesis teaches us that *‘the definitive aim of all catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ.’*¹⁷ Our preparation for the sacraments should be primarily about making disciples. When adults ask to be baptised or received into the Church, are we instructing them or are we leading them to intimacy with Jesus Christ? When children are brought for baptism are we setting them on the road to discipleship? Are our confirmation, marriage, reconciliation and communion preparation programmes a fresh encounter with the Lord?

...of all the nations

Who is called to be a disciple? Pope Francis reminds us that every person is called to be a disciple of the Lord, to encounter him. Pope Francis calls us to open our churches, not just physically but metaphorically. He writes,

*‘The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. There are other doors that should not be closed either. Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community, nor should the doors of the sacraments be closed for simply any reason. This is especially true of the sacrament which is itself “the door”: baptism. The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.’*¹⁸

We are called to open wide the doors of the Church to every person.

Everything about us,
all that we are,
should ‘proclaim the Gospel from the housetops’.
All that we do and our whole lives
should be an example of what
the Gospel way of life means in practice,
and should make it unmistakably clear that we belong to Jesus.
Our entire being should be a living witness,
a reflection of Jesus.

Charles de Foucauld

¹⁷ General Directory on Catechesis, 80

¹⁸ EG 47



Personal Reflection Questions

What is my understanding of the term 'evangelisation'?

Do we have to be perfect before we enter the School of Jesus?

Am I a disciple - 'teachable', 'willing to be apprenticed to the Master'?

In what ways do I display the four marks of being a disciple that are lived out by St Stephen?

Am I engaged in the service of others, especially the poor?

Am I 'full of faith and the Holy Spirit'?

Am I willing to witness to my faith?

Am I willing to forgive?

Group Questions

To what extent does my parish/community/group show the marks of missionary discipleship?

Do our activities draw others into the School of Jesus?

Do we expect people to be perfect before they can enter the School of Jesus?

Who does not feel welcome in our Churches? Why?

What can we do about that?

Do we view the Eucharist as a prize for the perfect or as medicine for the soul?

If evangelisation is 'everything that the Church is called to do in order to engage in the mission of Christ', what simple steps could we take improve:

Proclamation and Witness

Do we regularly and honestly appraise our preaching, reading, and our use of the written word in newsletters, on websites, social media etc.

Teaching

What tools are available to us to support faith formation in our parish/community/group? Do we use them? Are the formation and sacramental preparation programmes that we offer mere instruction or are they leading people into intimacy with Jesus Christ?

Service

In what ways do we motivate, facilitate and co-ordinate service to others, especially the poor?

Liturgy and Prayer

In what ways can we improve our liturgies so that they lead us into deeper intimacy with Christ and draw others to him?

Administration and Finance

What are our priorities in the use of our buildings, money and resources? Are they at the service of evangelisation which constitutes the essential mission of the Church? If not, why not?

Additionally, you may wish to consider:

What are we already doing well? What could we do better?

What are we not doing that God might be calling us to?

Are we open to new opportunities for evangelisation?

Are we willing to learn from other parishes and churches?

Are there things that we should not be doing at all?



MISSION

When we reflect upon ‘mission’ we should have at the forefront of our minds the mission of the Redeemer, the saving work of Jesus Christ. It is his ‘sending’ by the Father which gives meaning to all mission. In St John’s Gospel, Jesus himself sums up this mission.

*‘Yes God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world but so that through him the world might be saved.’*¹⁹

Jesus has come to reveal the Father’s mercy and lead humanity to salvation.

The Church does not have a mission which is separate from the mission of Jesus. We are called to share in the work, the mission, of Christ. After the resurrection, Jesus gave his disciples what has become known as the Great Commission. He teaches them, and us, how to share his mission and it is very simple - he commissions them to make disciples who will keep his commandments.

Matthew’s Gospel ends thus:

*‘The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes to the end of time.’*²⁰

In the commissioning of his disciples Jesus sets two goals for the Church. First, his disciples are to use his power and authority to make disciples of all people and all nations. Having made disciples, they are to be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Second, when they had been prepared in this way they were to ‘observe all the commands I gave you’.

This is the mission of the Church - we do not have to make a new plan for the Church. From the beginning this has been Christ’s plan for his people. St John Paul II said that if the Church is to fulfil its destiny, *‘evangelisation as the joyful, patient and progressive preaching of the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be your absolute priority.’*²¹

It is true that some members of the Church are known as missionaries, and certain religious orders and priests have specific missionary tasks but all Christians are entrusted with the work of mission. Obedience to the great commission of Christ is the mission of the entire people of God, of every disciple.

¹⁹ John 3:16-17

²⁰ Matthew 28: 16-20

²¹ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 6 November 1999, 19



Pope Francis reminds us:

'In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptised, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelisation, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelisation to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelisation calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptised. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelisation; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples". If we are not convinced, let us look at those first disciples, who, immediately after encountering the gaze of Jesus, went forth to proclaim him joyfully: "We have found the Messiah!" (Jn:41). The Samaritan woman became a missionary immediately after speaking with Jesus and many Samaritans come to believe in him "because of the woman's testimony" (Jn 4:39). So too, St Paul, after his encounter with Jesus Christ, "immediately proclaimed Jesus" (Acts 9:20; cf. 22:6-21). So what are we waiting for?'²²

I am a mission

When Pope Francis writes about mission he uses an unusual phrase. He does not say 'I have a mission' or 'I am on a mission' he says, **'I am a mission'**²³.

*'My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an "extra" or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world.'*²⁴

Just as the whole of Christ's existence is not just what he does it is who he is, so Jesus calls us to see that our mission is who we are. Once we have encountered Jesus Christ he makes mission our life. Our mission is not a plan or a programme it is a consequence of having been changed by the Lord.

Once we have met Christ we begin to see the world as he sees it, to look at situations as he does. The priorities of the Gospel become ours.

A model for mission - St Paul

The great example of mission for us is St Paul.

He encountered the Lord in a dramatic manner on the road to Damascus, an event so important that it is told three times in the Acts of the Apostles. Once he has met the Lord, Paul's whole existence changes. When St Stephen was martyred Paul (then still Saul) stood nearby, approving of

²² EG 120

²³ EG 273

²⁴ EG 273



what was happening. Following that encounter with Christ, Paul's whole life became 'a mission' as he allowed the Gospel to shape his life. He travelled all over the Roman Empire to make disciples who would keep Christ's commands.

After many years of mission, Paul returned to Jerusalem to speak with the Apostles: *'I expounded the whole gospel that I preach to the gentiles, to make quite sure that the effort I was making and already had made would not be fruitless'*²⁵. Paul reported that the only request James, Peter and John made of him was, *'nothing more than that we should remember to help the poor'*²⁶.

The only test of authenticity that the other Apostles ask of Paul is that he helps the poor. It remains the test of the authenticity for every disciple. Pope Francis is asking that every disciple make it the test of our missionary response to the Lord.

Discovering our mission

Evangelisation is both discipleship and mission and we cannot have one without the other. We are each called to 'missionary discipleship' and while the shape mission takes will be different for each person, there is one common thread. As the Apostles told St Paul we should be concerned for the poor. Pope Francis tells us that the first direction of mission is always toward the poor.

*'If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, "those who cannot repay you" (Lk 14:14). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and always, the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel, and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.'*²⁷

*'We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing. All around us we begin to see nurses with soul, teachers with soul, politicians with soul, people who have chosen deep down to be with others and for others. But once we separate our work from our private lives, everything turns grey and we will always be seeking recognition or asserting our needs.'*²⁸

²⁵ Galatians 2:2

²⁶ Galatians 2:10

²⁷ EG 48

²⁸ EG 273



Jesus leaps to his feet

We know that Jesus came to suffer and to die at the will of the Father but we must remember at all times that Jesus is not a reluctant Saviour. As the Father sends the Son so also the Son is eager to undertake the work of salvation.

The Welsh poet RS Thomas wrote about Jesus:

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look, he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows; a bright
Serpent, a river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.
On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The sky. Many people
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he said.²⁹

Jesus the Son says to the Father 'let me go there'. It is an example for each of us. We can turn to God and ask him to direct us to mission, to give us our mission. Having truly encountered the Lord we will be propelled into mission. And we know where to go – to the poor, to those on the edge - that is where our mission will always lead us first.

Pope Benedict also wrote often of how Jesus leaps to his feet to bring salvation to humanity. In his first homily as pope he said:

*'The Son of God cannot abandon humanity in so wretched a condition. He leaps to his feet and abandons the glory of heaven, in order to go in search of the sheep and pursue it, all the way to the Cross. He takes it upon his shoulders and carries our humanity; he carries us all – he is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.'*³⁰

We too should be eager to receive our mission and to carry it out because the mission that the Lord makes of our lives is what will bring us true joy. We should discern our mission with prayer and the guidance of others but once the Lord has given us our mission we can embrace it because, however difficult, if the Lord gives us a mission he will give us the strength to bring it to completion.

²⁹ R.S. Thomas, *The Coming*

³⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry, 24 April 2005



God has created me to do him some definite service.
He has committed some work to me
which he has not committed to another.
I have my mission.
I may never know it in this life,
but I shall be told it in the next.
I am a link in a chain,
a bond of connection between persons.
He has not created me for nothing.
I shall do good - I shall do his work.
I shall be an angel of peace,
a preacher of truth in my own place while not
intending it if I do but keep his commandments.
Therefore I will trust him.
Whatever I do, wherever I am,
I can never be thrown away.
If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him.
In perplexity, my perplexity may serve him.
If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him.
He does nothing in vain.
He knows what he is about.
He may take away my friends,
he may throw me among strangers,
he may make me feel desolate,
make my spirits sink, hide my future from me –
still he knows what he is about.

Blessed John Henry Newman



Personal Reflection questions

“Go therefore, make disciples of all nations.” When I read or hear the **Great Commission** do I consider that this is for me or have I always thought this is for ‘other people’ to carry out?

In what ways can I say ‘I am a mission’? In other words, how can I live as a missionary disciple and fully integrate this into my daily life?

What prevents me from taking up my mission?

What could I do about this?

If service to the poor is the test of authenticity for every disciple, in what ways do I place myself and/or my resources at the service of the poor?

Do I explicitly say to God, ‘send me’?

How can I, with prayer and the guidance of others, discern my mission?

When I have found my mission do I leap to my feet as Jesus does?

Do I believe that it will bring me true joy?

Group questions

Do we believe that the mission of the Church and the mission of Jesus are one and the same?

What is the mission of our parish?

In what way is our parish already missionary?

Do our activities reflect the centrality of the ‘making of disciples’ within the Great Commission or do we settle for ‘preaching, teaching and baptising’?

Where is God sending us?

Where are the peripheries in our area?

Who are the poor that God is sending us to serve?

Additionally, you may wish to consider:

What are we already doing well?

What could we do better?

What are we not doing that God might be calling us to?

Are we prepared for the long-term commitment of creating missionary disciples rather than a more short-term approach focussing on sacramental preparation only?

Are we willing to engage with the other Christian churches in our area in our missionary activities?

Are there things that we should not be doing at all?

Look at the resources available in Part Two and consider ways you might use them or participate in the events so that you might be more engaged in mission.



THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL *The Kerygma*

The witness of life and the service of the poor is absolutely essential in the mission of the Church but we must remember that all missionary activity is directed toward proclamation.

As Blessed Paul VI wrote:

*'Evangelisation will also always contain - as the foundation, centre, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism - a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy.'*³¹

The one indispensable dimension of our mission is to make Christ known, to teach others of the saving mission of Christ. There can be no real evangelisation without a clear proclamation of the Good News.

Of prime importance is **the kerygma**. The word kerygma simply means to herald or to proclaim. Every Christian should be able to proclaim the central message of the Gospel.

Pope Francis writes:

*'The first proclamation must ring out over and over: "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you."'*³²

Pope Francis offers these words as his interpretation of the kerygma. His invitation to us is to be able to articulate the kerygma ourselves, from the heart. He uses an unusual word in his writings to describe the kerygma - he speaks of a 'synthesis'. It is a useful word because it means 'that which holds everything together'. Reminding us of the Sermon on the Mount, Pope Francis writes, 'where your synthesis is there lies your heart.'³³ He is echoing the words of Jesus 'Where your treasure is there lies your heart'. (Matthew 6:21)

It is only what lies in our hearts that will speak to the heart of another. The challenge to us is to find the words that express what lies at the heart of our faith in Christ. What is it that holds our faith together? The synthesis is what any Christian can offer to any other person. It is not a retelling of creeds or doctrine but an articulation of what is in the heart.

A model for proclamation - St Peter

In the Gospels, Jesus asks the Apostles: 'Who do you say I am?' and Peter answers 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' (Matthew 16:16). Jesus didn't want to know what others thought, he wanted to know what lay in the hearts of the disciples. We too are called to answer Christ's question, 'Who do you say I am?'

³¹ EN 27

³² EG 164

³³ EG 143



Always have the answer ready

In carrying out our mission we do not always preach explicitly but when asked about our faith we should be able to articulate what our faith means to us. St Peter reminded us in his letter *'and always have the answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that is in you. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience'*.³⁴

Every age has to have the faith proclaimed anew. We talk today about a 'new evangelisation' but it is not the content of the faith which is new but the way it is expressed. St John Paul II said that the new evangelisation had to be new in 'its ardour, new in its methods and new in its expression'³⁵.

Pope Francis reminds us of the same fact. Our times are calling us to find new ways in which to express our faith. He writes:

'Today's vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness. The deposit of the faith is one thing, the way it is expressed is another'.³⁶

That can sound daunting but we must remember that every generation needs to hear the Gospel afresh and to hear it in a way which makes sense of their lives. Part of the appeal of the saints through the ages is that they offer a synthesis of the Gospel which reveals the truth of the Gospel in ways which speak to contemporary culture. The way they lived their lives was in itself an example of the Gospel. They found ways of proclaiming the faith which expressed the kerygma in new ways. All of us can think of examples. In the 13th century, St Francis was called by God to 'rebuild his Church' and brought about a return to the Gospel values of poverty and humility. In the 19th century St Therese of Lisieux revealed anew the depths of the love of God which is accessible to all, especially those who are poor and unimportant. Both of these saints had an enormous impact upon the Church and the world. In our own times we have seen saints such as St Teresa of Calcutta and Blessed Oscar Romero who do not proclaim a new Gospel but find a new way of expressing it, of incarnating it for our time.

When we look to the saints we can see that the most powerful witnesses of Christ are those who have proclaimed him simply and clearly. Each of us should be able to express the heart of our faith in this way. It may be that we borrow the words of others. If words speak to our own hearts they are likely speak to the hearts of others.

Pope Francis offers us his own synthesis and it is simple and clear.

*"Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you."*³⁷



³⁴ 1Peter 3:15

³⁵ John Paul II, Address to the Bishops of Latin America, 24 March 1983

³⁶ EG 41

³⁷ EG 164

The first proclamation

The challenge to us is to keep the kerygma at the centre of the faith because it forms the key to evangelisation and thus to the purpose of the Church. If the activity of Christians forgets Christ and the profession of his saving death and resurrection, then its work becomes devoid of meaning. The proclamation of Christ must be at the core of all that the Church does. Pope Francis writes:

‘This first proclamation is called “first” not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment.’³⁸

All catechesis, all preaching, all liturgy and all missionary work must have at its heart the kerygma, the synthesis of our faith, the explicit proclamation of Christ.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis pinpoints three key areas that become meaningless unless the kerygma is not the constant point of reference. These are catechesis, preaching and the moral teaching of the Church.

First, he says that catechesis at **every level must be an expression of God’s love**. The death and resurrection of Christ is not one topic among many others. Whether we are teaching about baptism, the Eucharist, reconciliation or marriage, at every level catechesis must be taught in the light of the Paschal Mystery. Pope Francis writes:

‘We must not think that in catechesis the kerygma gives way to a supposedly more “solid” formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation.’³⁹

Second, Pope Francis emphasises that preaching becomes insubstantial and can descend into moralising **if the love of God is not its constant reference point**. He writes,

‘Where your synthesis is, there lies your heart. The difference between enlightening people with a synthesis and doing so with detached ideas is like the difference between boredom and heartfelt fervour.’⁴⁰

Third, he says that the moral teaching of the Church becomes meaningless and empty if it is not seen as **a response to God’s saving love**.

‘Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others. Under no circumstance can this invitation be obscured! All of the virtues are at the service of this response of love. If this invitation does not radiate forcefully and attractively, the edifice of the Church’s moral teaching risks becoming a house of

³⁸ EG 164

³⁹ EG 165

⁴⁰ EG 143



cards, and this is our greatest risk. It would mean that it is not the Gospel which is being preached, but certain doctrinal or moral points based on specific ideological options. The message will run the risk of losing its freshness and will cease to have the fragrance of the Gospel.’⁴¹

Loving Father

you have sent your Son Jesus
to give his life for us and to save us.
By encountering him anew each day
may we grow in our trust
that Christ is always at our side
bringing us strength and freedom.
Give us the courage,
by the way we live
and the words we speak,
to witness to the joy of the Gospel
and so bring others to the light of Christ.
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

St Therese of Lisieux, **pray for us.**
St Francis of Assisi, **pray for us.**
St Teresa of Calcutta, **pray for us.**
Blessed Oscar Romero, **pray for us.**



Personal Reflection Questions

Am I able to proclaim the central message of the Gospel?

Do I ever speak to others of my faith in Jesus?

Am I receptive to other people who speak to me of their faith?

Do I have my own synthesis? In other words, can I distil the faith of my heart into words that could speak to the heart of another?

“Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.” How far does this express my own faith? Would I add anything, or take anything away?

Do I have an answer for the hope that is in me?

Group Reflection Questions

Can you formulate a short and simple expression of the faith which lies at the heart of your parish / your community / your parish group?

Is the kerygma at the heart of all that we do in our parish / group?

Do we offer opportunities which communicate the kerygma to ourselves in new ways?

How can we offer a proclamation of the kerygma in a new way to the community around us?

If you are a priest, deacon, catechist or teacher, does the kerygma form a part of all that you teach?

In our articulation of the kerygma we can ask ourselves

What are we already doing well?

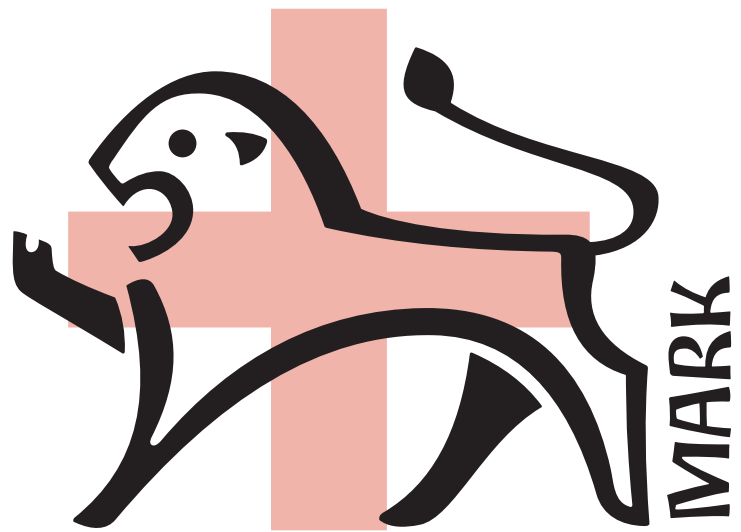
What could we do better?

What are we *not* doing that God might be calling us to?

Look at the resources available in Part Two and consider ways you might use them or participate in the events so that you might be able to articulate your faith.



PART TWO



MISSION



RESOURCES

A Future Full of Hope: Mission - A resource for parish conversation

This resource has been designed to enable parishes, communities and individuals to reflect upon the call to evangelise and the call to be missionary disciples so as to energise us into being the Church Christ calls us to be. Drawing us to return to the source that is Christ and his Gospel and rooted in the teachings of recent popes, this booklet offers our diocesan community a real resource upon which to build, allowing communities and parishes to respond in the way that is best and most fruitful for them.

Resources for the prayerful reading and study of Mark's Gospel

Fr Nicholas King SJ has recorded a series of five short video reflections that will be available from the start of Advent 2017 to lead our diocesan community into a refreshed reading of St Mark's Gospel and to deepen our understanding of the Jesus that Mark proclaims. This series is offered to parishes and individuals by way of accompanying their reading of the Gospel.

The Art of Encounter

This simple series of reflections available through 2018 will allow us to reflect upon the personal encounter and touch of Jesus in the lives of those he met and called. Using some beautiful examples from the world of art we come to explore in a visual way what Pope Francis draws us into by way of 'person to person' evangelisation.

Catechists' Course

This diocesan formation course for existing and new catechists seeks to nurture and enrich those with the ministry and responsibility of handing on faith to others with skill, ability and insight to enable them to evangelise through their work of catechesis. Taking place at our Cathedral (beginning October 2017), in Brockworth (beginning February 2018), and in Salisbury (Beginning October 2018), this ten session course draws catechists together in conversation, reflection, formation and prayer.

Formation Course for Pastoral Assistants

Recognising the immense skill, giftedness and ability of the lay people of our diocese and aware of the call to live out a baptismal vocation of co-responsibility for the mission of the Church, this diocesan based formation course is designed to better enable potential pastoral leaders to support our priests, deacons and religious in building up communities of prayer and mission. The course will be taking place during 2018.

Newsletter Inserts across the Year of Mission

Following the example of Fr Matt Anscombe and his newsletter resources centred around vocations, these monthly newsletter inserts will allow parishes to anchor themselves firmly into this Year of Mission. This will begin at the start of December and will be sent, by email, to each parish to use in a way that is most useful.

Year of Mission Posters

Using the beautiful and vibrant artwork of Fr Jan Rossey OCSO from Caldey Abbey, crafted especially for our diocesan resources, a set of six posters radiating the call to mission is available to each parish, school, and community.



LITURGIES

Evening Liturgy & Presentation of the 'Year of Mission' (29 November 2017)

Called together by our bishop, we gather in our Cathedral to embark upon our Year of Mission. We celebrate evening prayer with Bishop Declan and representatives of each parish and community in the diocese, and be presented with the resource for the Year ahead.

Celebrating Marriage (3 February 2018)

Each year Bishop Declan invites our diocesan community to gather with him in our Cathedral in celebration of Marriage. He invites married couples to join him and, most especially, those celebrating significant wedding anniversaries across 2018. Its always a great gathering of people and couples from across the Clifton diocese and a tremendous celebration of God's love revealed in the commitment and living out of married love.

Lenten Station Masses: a diocesan pilgrimage (Lent 2018)

A simple, prayerful journey around our diocese centred upon the celebration of the Eucharist and the Prayer of the Church. Details of the Station Masses and its pilgrimage route will be available in January 2018.

Rite of Election (17 February 2018)

At the start of the Season of Lent our diocese gathers with those from the parishes of our diocese who are seeking baptism or reception into the life of our communities at Easter. The Rite of Election is a cry, not simply to them, but to the whole Church to continual conversion. Do come and join those who present themselves to the bishop to be welcomed and to be encouraged on their journey into deeper faith in Christ.

Liturgies of Reconciliation (Lent 2018)

Bishop Declan will once again celebrate Liturgies of Reconciliation in several venues across the diocese during Lent 2018. We gather to celebrate the mercy of God in Wincanton, Bath, Stroud, Swindon and Filton on the Thursdays of Lent (beginning 22 February).

Mass for Newly Baptised and Newly Received (19 May 2018)

Bishop Declan invites those who are baptised at Easter and those who are received into full communion with the Church to join him (along with their parishes, their sponsors and their families) at a celebration of Mass in thanksgiving for the gift of faith and the call to 'go, glorifying the Lord by our lives'. We gather in our Cathedral.

Eucharistic Adoration (in preparation for the National Congress)

The National Congress, Adoremus, present us with a real encouragement to embrace an initiative of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and to draw our 'gaze' upon the one who calls us in love and sends us out as witness to his Good News. This living encounter with Christ, present in the Eucharist, draws us into Divine Love so that we might go and communicate that love to others.



EVENTS

Diocesan Roadshows (12, 19, 26 April; 10, 17 May 2018)

Representatives from our diocesan departments based at Alexander House embark upon a series of evenings (and an afternoon) that allow our parish communities to appreciate the services that are on offer to them, as well as chance to ask questions and meet some of our diocesan staff.

Annual Diocesan Day (30 June 2018)

St Brendan's Sixth Form College hosts this diocesan gathering for another year and allows us a day of formation, reflection and insight around this Year of Mission. With keynote speaker, workshops, something for the children, and a time just to gather from across four counties with our bishop, this day allows us to ponder our mission as the Church in Clifton.

Gathering our Religious (27 June)

The Religious men and women working in our diocese gather together for a day of prayer, reflection and conversation.

Glastonbury Pilgrimage (8 July 2018)

Gathering as a diocesan family at the Shrine of Our Lady of Glastonbury, this annual pilgrimage invites us to place all that we are and all we are called to be, as the Church in this place, under the watchful care and prayerful intercession of the Mother of God.

World Meeting of Families (21 - 26 August 2018)

Dublin has been chosen by Pope Francis to host the next world meeting of families guided by the theme 'The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World'. This major international event brings families together from around the world to pray, reflect and celebrate the importance of marriage as the cornerstone of our lives, our Church, and our world.

Lourdes Pilgrimage (24 - 31 August 2018)

Bishop Declan leads this annual pilgrimage to Lourdes inviting us to keep our eyes fixed on the one who leads us to Christ, her Son.

The National Eucharistic Congress (7 - 9 September 2018)

This national initiative across three days invites us to reflect upon and celebrate the Eucharist at the heart of the Church and the heart of our lives. Each parish is being represented at this national gathering and parishes are being invited to participate, even remotely, in this important moment of prayer, formation, and evangelisation in our country.

Diocesan Pilgrimage to the Holy Land (22 - 30 October 2018)

Bishop Declan leads a group of diocesan pilgrims following the footsteps of Jesus and the disciples. Visiting the major places in Galilee, Bethlehem and Jerusalem, this time away in prayer and reflection draws us into a richer understanding of the Scriptures and of the call to be disciples. Booking forms and details are available from the Adult Education office or from cliftondiocese.com.



HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This booklet can be used in any way that supports mission in your parish. It can be used individually or as part of a parish or school group.

Our parishes are busy places where much is already happening to further the mission of the Church. This process does not necessarily seek to add to that work by adding another layer of activity or forming another group which will be responsible for the 'Year of Mission'. The purpose is to look at all that we already do and ask ourselves if our activity furthers the challenge to be 'missionary disciples'.

The Parish Council or Parish Team could look at the material and resources and find ways to direct existing groups to use them to reflect on what they do. Perhaps a few members of the Parish Council could form a working party to direct the various parish groups toward this booklet and the resources it points to.

If there is no Parish Council at this time the parish priest might want to call three or four parishioners together to look at the resources and then consider ways to help parish groups to use it as might be appropriate for them.

Parish Council/ Parish Team

In addition the Parish Council could use the reflections to consider how their own work is truly at the service of the mission of Christ.

Parish Finance Group

How is the work of administration part of your own discipleship and the mission?

Parish Catechists

In our preparation for baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, and marriage are we truly forming 'missionary disciples?'

Saint Vincent de Paul

How are we formed as disciples so that we may fulfil our mission?

Parish Youth Group

How are we, as young people, aligned with the mission of our parish?

Parish Prayer Group

How does our prayer engage us in the mission of the Church?

Religious Community

How is our community contributing to the mission of the Church?

Parish School

Do we see our school community as part of the mission of the Church?



Justice and Peace How do we make justice and peace issues more central to the life of every disciple?

Ecumenism What can we learn from other churches in their work of mission?

This list is obviously not exhaustive and groups such as the Knights of St Columba, the Catenian Association, The Legion of Mary, A Call to Action (ACTA), Union of Catholic Mothers, the Catholic Women's League might all use this resource in order to reflect on their own particular role as missionary disciples.

As you can see, this booklet is divided into two parts. The introduction places this document within the overall framework of the three years of A Future Full of Hope and includes a section on the meaning of evangelisation which will underpin the three years of Mission, Prayer and Communion.

Part One has three sections which are entitled Discipleship, Mission and the Heart of the Gospel. **Part Two** offers us the resources that might accompany us through the Year as well as invitations to participate in events and liturgies that help mark this Year of Mission. Each of the three sections in Part One ends with questions for reflection. Some questions may not be relevant to every person or every place. It is intended that the study of this document will lead to a deepening of our missionary work and so each section ends by asking three questions:

What are we already doing well?

What could we do better?

What are we not doing that God might be calling us to?

Many of us understand that we should be evangelisers but we feel unable to measure up to the demands. We may have tried and feel we have not succeeded. Even our own family members, our children, may have walked away from the Church. We ourselves feel humbled by the Church's present problems. Who are we to evangelise?

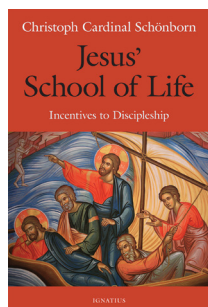
This Year of Mission reminds us of the importance of even small advances - to be a good neighbour, to show kindness to those in need, to visit the sick. In these ways we can bring in the light of hope, the joy of the Gospel and the warmth of God's presence.

Whatever the challenge Pope Francis reminds us,

'an evangelising community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelisation'.⁴²



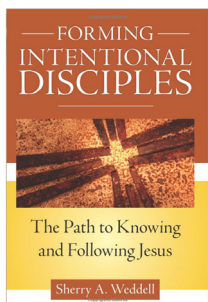
FURTHER READING



Jesus' School of Life

Christoph Cardinal Schonborn, Ignatius Press, 2016
Cardinal Schonborn, the Archbishop of Vienna, demonstrates in this book that the call of Jesus is not an abstract idea but a way of life.

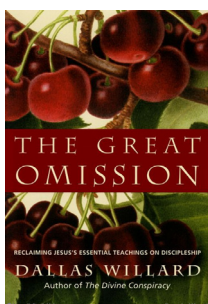
ISBN: 9781586179076



Forming Intentional Disciples

Sherry Weddell, Our Sunday Visitor, 2012
How can we transmit a living, personal Catholic faith to future generations? By coming to know Jesus Christ, and following him as his disciples.

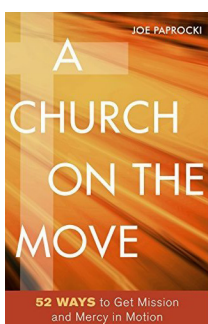
ISBN: 9781612785905



The Great Omission

Dallas Willard, Monarch Books, 2006
The last command that Jesus gave the Church before he ascended to heaven was the Great Commission, the call to 'make disciples of all nations'. But Christians have responded by making Christians, not disciples. This in Dallas Willard's view has been the church's Great Omission.

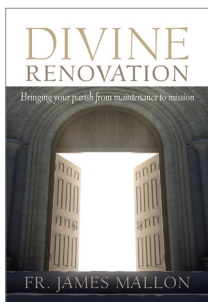
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A Church on the Move

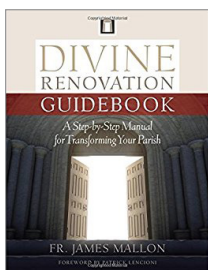
Joe Paprocki, Loyola Press, 2016
52 ways to get mission and mercy in motion in your parish.

ISBN: 9780829444056



Divine Renovation

James Mallon, Twenty-Third Publications, 2014
Mallon challenges us to rethink our models of parish life, from membership-based communities to assemblies of disciples of Jesus who proclaim and share the good news with all peoples. Accessible and engaging, Divine Renovation turns to the Church's many writings on evangelisation and mission so as to articulate practical ways for injecting new life into our parishes. ISBN: 9781627850384

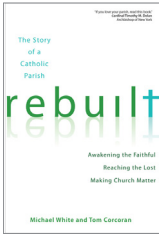


Divine Renovation Guidebook

James Mallon, Novalis, 2016
A step by step guide to implementing Fr Mallon's plan for the renovation of parish life.

ISBN: 9781627852241





Rebuilt

Michael White and James Corcoran, Ave Maria Press, 2013
Fr Michael White and lay associate Tom Corcoran present the compelling and inspiring story to how they brought their parish back to life.

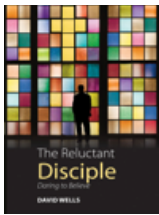
ISBN: 9781594713863



Tools for Rebuilding

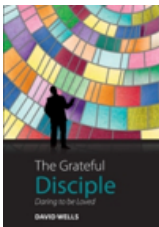
Michael White and James Corcoran, Ave Maria Press, 2013
Fr Michael White and Tom Corcoran offer simple tips, tools and practical ways to make our parishes 'better'.

ISBN: 9781594714443



The Reluctant Disciple

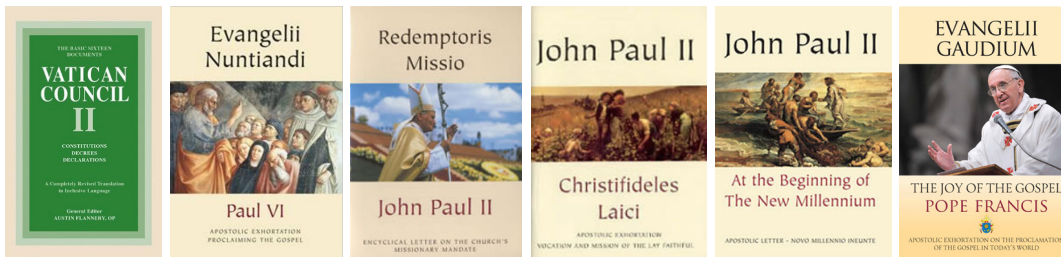
David Wells, Redemptorist Publications, 2015
ISBN: 9780852314210



The Grateful Disciple

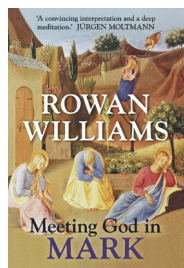
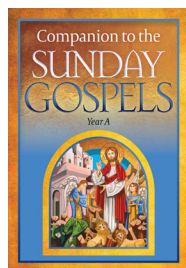
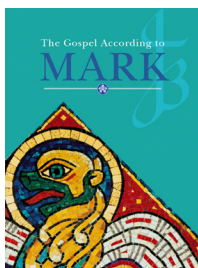
David Wells, Redemptorist Publications, 2015
ISBN: 9780852315231

The Second Vatican Council and Papal Documents



The Documents of the Second Vatican Council as well as these papal documents are available from the Resource Library of vatican.va or from the CTS

St Mark's Gospel



Archbishop Rowan Williams explores the essential meaning and purpose of St Mark's Gospel for complete beginners as well as for those who have read the Gospel many times before and want to see it in a fresh light. It is easy to read with questions for conversation, and provides a wonderful resource for parish groups. ISBN: 8601410671105

Mark's Gospel and the Companion to the Sunday Gospels are available from the CTS



CHRISTIAN HOPE

During the consultation process some asked for a clarification of what exactly we mean by hope. The following reflection on the meaning of Christian hope may be useful.

When we speak about hope we don't mean wishful thinking or a vague feeling that it will all be right in the end. When God promises us 'a future full of hope' he is promising us that he is always with us and that when we co-operate with his grace, he will build a future with us.

Christian hope means to have heard the word of God and to believe that he will be faithful to that word.

The great hope

Pope Benedict XVI wrote an encyclical letter on hope called **Spe Salvi** – the hope of Salvation. He reminded us that there are different types of hope. There are lesser and greater hopes.

For example, if we are planning a great celebration, maybe a birthday party, an anniversary or a wedding, we might hope that on the day we will have good weather. A fine sunny day would be good and helps the day go better. Pope Benedict would call that 'a lesser hope.' There are greater hopes for a birthday or an anniversary: that there will be many more; that a marriage will endure; that the love of the couple will grow. These are greater hopes.

Pope Benedict wrote that even if all our hopes for life are fulfilled, we remain in need of an even greater hope. He suggests there is the great hope.

*'We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day but these are not enough without the great hope which surpasses everything. That great hope is God'*⁴³

The great hope of our faith is that God is with us, that he is leading us to a future not yet known to us. It is the great hope that gives meaning to the lesser hopes. It doesn't mean that there will not be setbacks and disappointments along the way but it is this great hope that gives us joy.

Mary can teach us what it means to live in this great hope. Mary is the one who is open to the will of God, who ponders the word. She is constantly open to the new life which God offers, to 'the future full of hope' which forms her horizon. She can teach us how to be a disciple. Even more she teaches us how to be a 'missionary disciple'. She is the model of the disciple who receives her mission from God. Whatever plans she may have had for her life she put herself into God's hands and went wherever he led her - to Bethlehem, to Egypt, to Nazareth, to Golgotha, to the Upper Room where the Holy Spirit first came down upon the Apostles at Pentecost.

Each of us receives our own mission from God and we may be like Mary and think 'but how can this come about? The promise to us is the same as it was to her: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you'.⁴⁴ For hope to take root we must listen as she did, attentively to the word of God, to the promises of God.

⁴³ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi*, 31

⁴⁴ Luke 1: 35



Sharing hope

The mission that each one of us has is not to keep that hope bottled up within us. We are called to share the ‘great hope’ with others. In his vision statement Bishop Declan reminded us that ‘the Church is created by God to live, not for itself, but for others.’ The world is waiting for the hope that Christ can bring.

The difficulties of life can often rob us of hope, both lesser and greater hopes. One example of the loss of hope is expressed in the work of the Irish writer Oscar Wilde. When he was in prison he wrote of his terrible experience there in the poem ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’. He wrote how his prison sentence of backbreaking hard labour and the separation from loved ones broke his spirit. He tells of the atmosphere in the gaol and how he and all the prisoners are robbed of hope:

‘We did not dare to breathe a prayer
or give our anguish scope
something was dead in each of us
and what was dead was hope’⁴⁵

The world in which we live can be often feel bereft of hope just as Wilde did. Many cannot ‘*breathe a prayer*’ because they are crushed. What we have to offer is the great hope that is expressed in the kerygma, the proclamation of the love of God: ‘Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you’.

We are called to anchor our hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pope Francis writes,

*‘It is no coincidence that among the symbols of Christian hope there is one that I really like: **the anchor**. It expresses the notion that our hope is not vague; it is not to be confused with the uncertain sentiment of those who wish to improve the things of this world in an unrealistic way, relying only on their own willpower. Indeed, Christian hope is rooted not in the allure of the future, but in the certainty of what God has promised us and accomplished in Jesus Christ. If he guaranteed he would never abandon us, if every vocation begins with a “Follow me”, with which he assures us he is always before us, why should we be afraid? With this promise, Christians can walk everywhere. Even passing through parts of the wounded world, where things are not going well, we are among those who still continue to hope. The Psalm says: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me.” It is precisely where darkness is rife that a light must be kept burning. Let us return to the anchor. Our faith is the anchor in heaven. We have anchored our life in heaven. What do we have to do? Hold fast to the rope: it is always there. And we go forward because we are certain that our life has an anchor in heaven, on that shore where we will arrive.’⁴⁶*

⁴⁵ Oscar Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*

⁴⁶ Pope Francis, General Audience, 27 April 2017



DIOCESAN PRAYER

God our Father,
open the horizons of our minds and hearts
so that we can see what hope your call holds for us.

Pour out the overflowing gifts of your Spirit
so that we, your Church,
may become a people of hope for our world.

We ask you this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

Our Lady, Woman of Hope,
pray for us.

St Peter, Rock of Hope,
pray for us.

St Paul, Apostle of Hope,
pray for us.

