



CALLED TO BE a people of

HOPE



PARISHES

in communion for mission

*This booklet outlines
our vision for the
future organisation
of parishes*



cliftondiocese.com

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 //



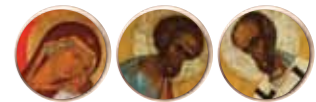
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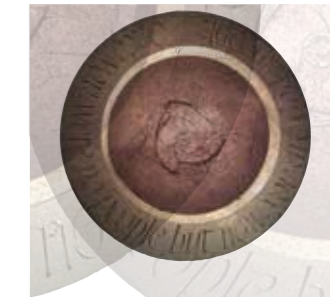
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INTRODUCTION

When the first disciples heard the call of the risen Jesus to **'go therefore, make disciples of all 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'** MATT 28:19-20, they must have been terrified. Only recently they had nearly all deserted him. They had shown a lack of faith and their courage had failed them. Now Jesus was entrusting them to share with others the way of life he had lived and died for. All they had for the task was the promise of Jesus that he would be with them and they would be empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Ever since the command of Jesus to go into the world, disciples have emerged from behind closed doors – locked out of fear – to be light of the world and salt of the earth. Inadequately resourced as far as human judgement is concerned, the Church has and still does proclaim the Gospel for people of every generation and variety of cultures and race.

Our task is to be disciples for today. The promise of Jesus is that he is still with us and the Church, despite human inadequacy and sinfulness, is still empowered by the Holy Spirit who brings new life and opens new horizons.

Circumstances change and resources change. In this booklet which flows from our diocesan pastoral guidelines *'Called to be a People of Hope'* we acknowledge that there will be fewer priests actively engaged in full time ministry within our diocese. The effect of this will be felt by us all. The resulting change can bring new life and fresh ideas to our communities. Parishes are being encouraged to work more closely with one another in the mission of the Church. All God's faithful people are being asked to look again at what is the essential role of the priest and the responsibility of every individual Christian as a member of the Body of Christ.

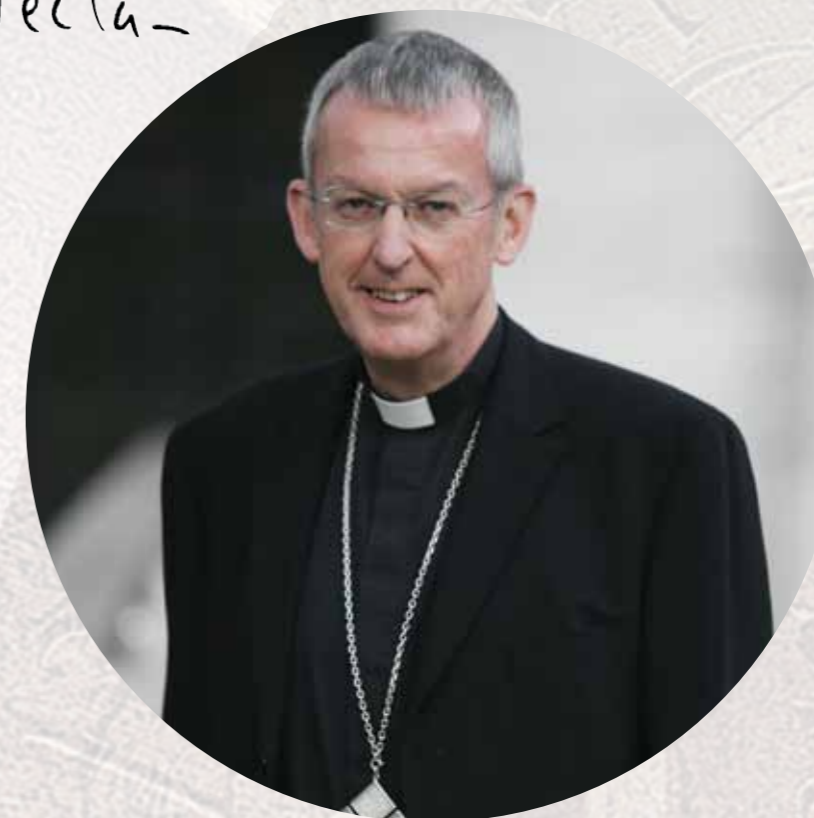
I would like to thank everyone who has participated in this consultation. All parishes were invited to express their point of view as to how best they could look to the future in the light of fewer priests. The responses and contributions were many. Whenever

possible the committee who have drawn up these recommendations have taken into account the views expressed. The implementation of what is proposed will probably take five years but its beginnings are for now.

In the Year for Priests we prayed for more vocations to the priesthood to equip the whole Church for mission. In his recent message to the Bishops of England and Wales, Pope Benedict XVI asked the bishops to encourage people to express their appreciation of the priests who serve them and to recognise the difficulties priests sometimes face on account of their fewer numbers and increasing pressures. The Pope added that: *"the support and understanding of people is particularly necessary when parishes have to be merged or Mass times adjusted. Help them to avoid any temptation to view the clergy as mere functionaries."*

None of us are mere functionaries. All of us are called to be disciples giving to others reasons for living and hoping.

+ Declan



RIGHT REVEREND DECLAN LANG, BISHOP OF CLIFTON

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Our diocesan pastoral guidelines, 'Called to be a People of Hope', paved the way for a number of initiatives that will steer our path through the coming years. One of these initiatives has led directly to the formation of a review committee and the production of this booklet:

“A committee is to be formed to review existing deanery and parish structures. In the light of projected numbers of clergy and pastoral needs, the committee will make recommendations to the Bishop, the Council of Priests, Council of Deacons and the Diocesan Pastoral Council. This report will form the basis of structural changes in our parish system and how they will be implemented.”¹

The review committee launched a diocesan-wide consultation process during the Spring of 2009. All parishes, through their parish priests, pastoral councils and our website, were asked what changes they would like to be made to their parish and deanery structures. They were also asked to suggest a neighbouring parish or parishes with whom they could most fruitfully cooperate to further the mission of the Church and ensure continued pastoral care in their area. Nearly all parishes responded and there were also many suggestions received from individuals and groups.

As a result, a draft report proposing parish arrangements was prepared and presented to the clergy of the diocese in October 2009. Lively discussion took place and feedback was recorded. The clergy were asked to take the document to their parishes, undertake further consultation and invite further comment. In addition, the draft report, and the opportunity to respond, was available to all via cliftondiocese.com.

The draft report inspired a second wave of responses as priests and people together considered the groups proposed. Consequently, this booklet differs from the first draft report as many of the suggestions received have now been incorporated. However, the great variety and occasionally contradictory nature of views expressed has meant that the adoption of all suggestions is impossible.

¹ Called to be a People of Hope page 15

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The review committee established a set of guiding principles as a context within which to consider the responses received and to inform their recommendations regarding parish groups. In establishing these guiding principles, attributing priority to the teaching of the Church was assumed.

- **Each parish must be led by a priest.**
- **It is recommended that a priest not celebrate Mass more than three times on a Sunday.²**
- **All recommendations will, where possible, be based upon responses received as part of the consultation process.**
- **Pre-existing arrangements and plans for cooperation are to be taken into account.**
- **In the light of projected numbers of priests and pastoral needs, most parishes will need to work as part of a larger group.**
- **There is no single model that will be appropriate across the whole diocese.**
- **Circumstances such as seating capacity of church buildings, geography and the ministry of religious orders are to be taken into account.**
- **Groups of parishes should not, where possible, cut across county and other secular boundaries.**
- **A serious attempt must be made to use the language of the Church – 'parishes' and 'deaneries' rather than the language of business management, geographical areas, topographical terms or numbers.**
- **Decisions about Mass times and the sustainability of small congregations and Mass centres are best made at local level.**



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² Canon 905



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PARISHES AND PRIESTS

PARISHES

The parish is the basic unit of the Church within a diocese:

“Each diocese or other particular church is to be divided into distinct parts or parishes.”³

“A parish is a certain community of Christ’s faithful stably established within a particular Church, whose pastoral care, under the authority of the diocesan bishop, is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor.”⁴

When parishes work together there is no mandatory way in which this has to be organised.

“To foster pastoral care by means of common action, several neighbouring parishes can be joined together in special groups...”⁵

Our diocese is currently organised into 107 parishes, forming 13 deaneries. Our current structure encourages us to work together in deaneries. Structures such as deaneries, groups of parishes or a combination of these are at the discretion of the bishop.

PRIESTS

The Congregation for the Clergy has clarified the role of the parish and the priest in the recent document ‘The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community’. This document also restates the necessity for the pastor of each parish to be a priest:

“The mission of pastor in a parish, which implies the full care of souls, absolutely requires the exercise of priestly orders. Hence, in addition to ecclesial communion, canon law explicitly stipulates that only a man constituted in the sacred order of the presbyterate can be validly nominated to the office of parish priest.”⁶

Taking this into account it has been necessary to look at the number of priests who currently serve in the local church of Clifton. It has also been necessary to make some likely projections regarding the number of priests who will be serving the diocese in the foreseeable future. The following graphs provide some information in this regard and some possible future scenarios.

³ Canon 374.1

⁴ Canon 515.1

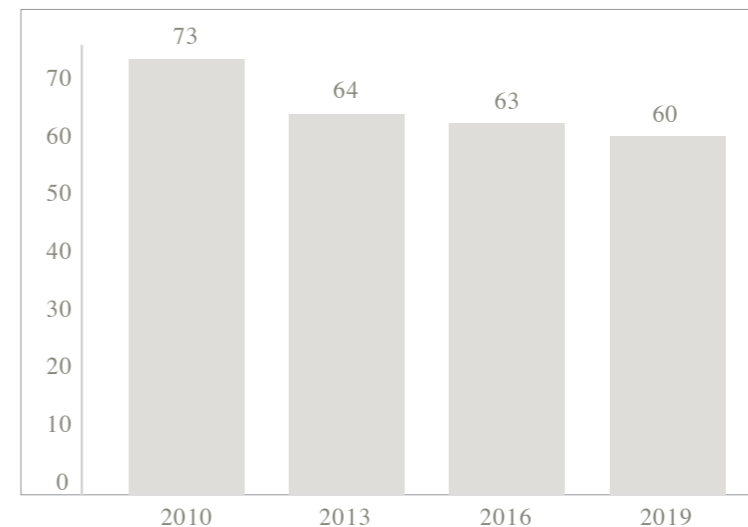
⁵ Canon 374.2

⁶ The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community, 2002

PROJECTED NUMBERS OF DIOCESAN PRIESTS

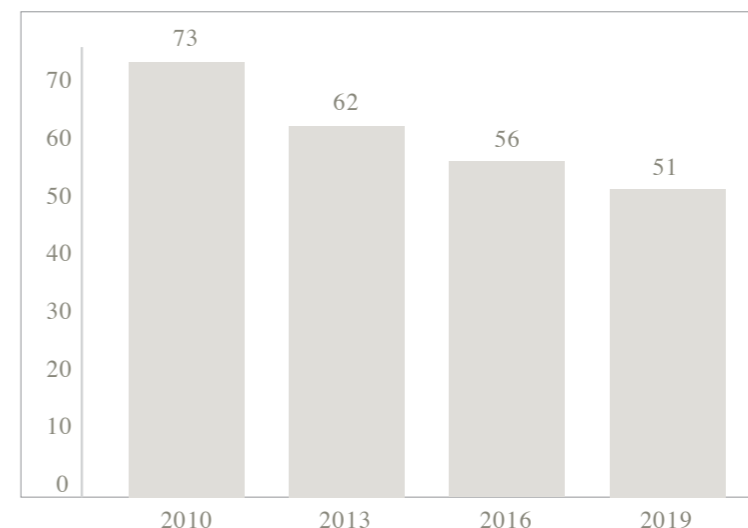
Best case scenario

These figures are based on the assumption that all priests retire from the office of parish priest at 75, and there is one ordination per year.



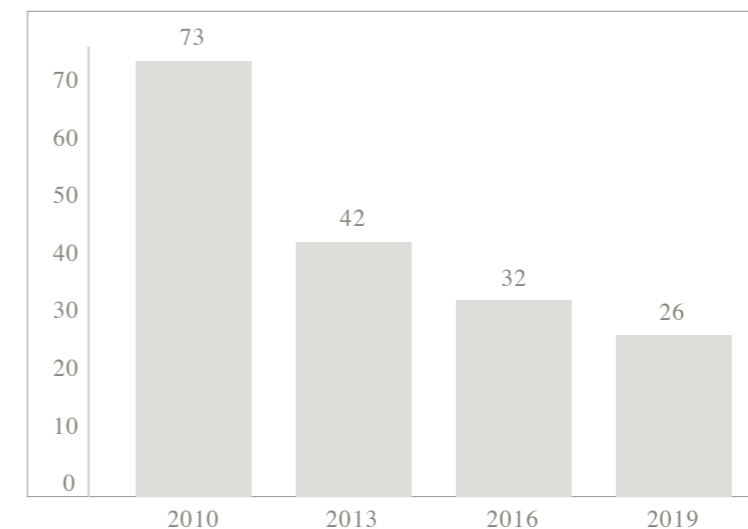
Median case scenario

These figures are based on the assumption that ¾ of priests retire from the office of parish priest at 70, and there is one ordination every two years.



Worst case scenario

These figures are based on the assumption that all priests retire from the office of parish priest at 65, and there are no ordinations.



IN COMMUNION FOR MISSION

Featured here are the recommendations for the future organisation of our parishes based upon resources of people, clergy and buildings that we have, and are likely to have, for the foreseeable future.

However, it is crucial that in all our planning and reorganising we continue to fix our gaze on the face of Christ in order that everything we do is grounded in the fundamental mission of the Church - which is the proclamation of the Gospel.

As Pope John Paul II wrote:

“God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel. I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church’s energies to a new evangelisation. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church, can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.”⁷

Bishop Declan directs all of our endeavours towards this ‘supreme duty’ by his key question in ‘Called to be a People of Hope’:

“Is what we do deepening prayer, enabling communion, and strengthening mission?”⁸

This document is a call to action – each member of every parish has a role to play – whether listed as part of a larger group or as a single parish, all of our energies must remain directed to that which will deepen prayer, enable communion and strengthen mission.

⁷ Redemptoris Missio, 1990

⁸ Called to be a People of Hope page 2

location	parish	diocesan priests
Bath	Our Lady and St Alphege	
Bath	St Peter and St Paul	1
Peasedown St John	St Joseph	
Batheaston	The Good Shepherd	
Bradford-on-Avon	St Thomas More	1
Bridgwater	St Joseph	
Burnham-on-Sea	Our Lady and the English Martyrs	1
Bristol, Bedminster	Holy Cross	
Bristol City Centre	St Mary-on-the-Quay	1 a
Bristol, Downend	St Augustine of Canterbury	
Bristol, Frenchay	St John Fisher	2
Bristol, Kingswood	Our Lady of Lourdes and St Bernadette	
Chipping Sodbury	St Lawrence	
Bristol, Easton	St Nicholas of Tolentino	
Bristol, Fishponds	St Joseph	2
Bristol, Redfield	St Patrick	
Bristol, Filton	St Teresa of the Child Jesus	
Bristol, Southmead	St Vincent de Paul	1
Bristol, Henbury	St Antony	
Bristol, Westbury-on-Trym	Sacred Heart	1
Bristol, Knowle	St Gerard Majella	
Bristol, Knowle West	Christ the King	2
Bristol, Whitchurch	St Bernadette	

Bristol, Lawrence Weston	Our Lady of the Rosary	1
Bristol, Shirehampton	St Bernard	
Brockworth	St Patrick	1
Churchdown	Our Lady of Perpetual Succour	
Calne	St Edmund	2
Chippenham	The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	
Cheddar	Our Lady Queen of the Apostles	1
Wells	St Joseph and St Teresa	
Cheltenham	St Gregory the Great	
Cheltenham	Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary	3
Cheltenham	St Thomas More	
Chew Magna	The Sacred Heart	1
Bristol, Withywood	St Pius X	
Chipping Campden	St Catharine	1
Stow-on-the-Wold	Our Lady and St Kenelm	
Cirencester	St Peter	
Malmesbury	St Aldhelm	1 b
Tetbury	St Michael	
Clevedon	The Immaculate Conception	
Nailsea	St Francis of Assisi	1 c
Portishead	St Joseph	
Coleford	St Margaret Mary	
Cinderford	Our Lady of Victories	2
Newent	Our Lady of Lourdes	
Corsham	St Patrick	1
Melksham	St Anthony of Padua	
Dulverton	St Stanislaus	1
Minehead	Sacred Heart	
Dursley	St Dominic	1
Nymphsfield	St Joseph	
Glastonbury	Our Lady, St Mary of Glastonbury	1
Shepton Mallet	St Michael	
Gloucester, Matson	St Augustine of Canterbury	1
Gloucester, Tuffley	English Martyrs	
Kemerton	St Benet	1
Tewkesbury	St Joseph	
Winchcombe	St Nicholas	
Marlborough	St Thomas More	1
Wroughton	St Joseph	
Salisbury	St Osmund	
Salisbury	St Gregory and the English Martyrs	2
Salisbury	Most Holy Redeemer	
Somerton	St Dunstan	
Langport	St Joseph	0 d
Yeovil	The Holy Ghost	
Stonehouse	St Joseph	1
Woodchester	The Annunciation	
Swindon	St Peter	1
Wootton Bassett	The Sacred Heart	
Taunton	St George	2
Taunton	St Teresa of Lisieux	
Wellington	St John Fisher	
Thornbury	Christ the King	0 e
Wotton-under-Edge	Holy Cross	
Weston-super-Mare	Corpus Christi	2
Weston-super-Mare	Our Lady of Lourdes	
Weston-super-Mare	St Joseph	
	Total diocesan priests	41



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a The Divine Word Missionaries provide pastoral care for St-Mary-on-the-Quay.

b The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales provide pastoral care for St Aldhelm.

c The Franciscans provide pastoral care for The Immaculate Conception.

d The Missionaries of St Francis de Sales provide pastoral care for these parishes.

e The Salvatorians provide pastoral care for these parishes.

We recommend that the parishes listed below continue in their present forms. However, this recommendation does not mean that any positive collaboration already occurring with other parishes or within a deanery should be disrupted.

location	parish	diocesan priests
Amesbury	Christ the King	1
Bath	St Mary	1
Bath	St John the Evangelist	1
Bristol, Clifton	Cathedral Church of St Peter and St Paul includes University of Bristol Chaplaincy	2
Bristol, Patchway	Holy Family	1
Bristol, Bishopston	St Bonaventure	1
Chard	English Martyrs	1
Devizes	Our Lady, The Immaculate Conception	0 f
Fairford	St Thomas of Canterbury	1
Frome	St Catharine	1
Gloucester	St Peter	1
Keynsham	St Dunstan	1
Stroud	The Immaculate Conception	1
Swindon	Holy Family	1
Swindon	Holy Rood	2
Swindon	St Mary	1
Tisbury	The Sacred Heart	1
Trowbridge	St John the Baptist	1
Warminster	St George	1
Wincanton	St Luke and St Teresa	1
	Total diocesan priests	21

f The Missionaries of St Francis de Sales provide pastoral care for this parish.

The 'Downside parishes' do not feature in this booklet as their pastoral needs are met by Downside Abbey clergy.

THE WAY AHEAD

It is envisaged that the parish groups outlined in this booklet will be in place by September 2014. Of necessity, there are parishes where successful collaborative working within a group of parishes is already underway. However, there are parishes for which this will mark a new beginning.

In order that the recommendations of this booklet are successfully implemented, every parish of our diocese will need to engage in pastoral planning of one kind or another. Even those parishes for which there may appear to be little change are challenged to look at new ways of working in the changing circumstances of our diocese.

Key to the success of this plan is that we find new ways of working together. Priests, deacons, laity and religious all have vital contributions to make to ensure the success of this plan. Engagement in the formation and development of pastoral councils at parish, deanery and diocesan level will become more vital than ever.

The consultation process revealed the variety of challenges which lie ahead in the different parts of the diocese and many practical suggestions were made. All the responses which have been received have been kept in order to inform and assist with the provision of ongoing support.

DEANERIES

As the recommendations in this report are gradually achieved there will be a need to examine the deanery structures which exist to support them. This will be achieved by consultation with the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Council of Priests and the Council of Deacons.



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IMPLEMENTATION

A steering group will be appointed to oversee and support the process of implementation.

- **All parishioners should be made aware of this booklet and its recommendations during 2010.**
- **All parishes and their pastoral councils should begin or continue planning which is based upon recommendations in this booklet during 2010.**
- **Planning should take place in the context of current deanery structures and under the direction of the deans. Where groups of parishes cross deanery boundaries an arrangement should be made between the respective deans as to how this will be happen.**
- **The steering group will begin work with the deans immediately to ensure that the process of implementation is underway by the end of 2010.**
- **The recommendations will be phased in over time. Plans will not be implemented everywhere at the same time or at the same pace.**
- **There will be a review of the deanery structures which support our parishes.**
- **All of our diocesan departments exist to be at the service of our parishes and they work in support of 'Called to be a People of Hope'.**

Much consultation and careful consideration has led to the recommendations contained in this booklet. The bishop has accepted these recommendations and they are published here as the accepted plan for the future organisation of our diocese. However, change is a process and not an event and will continue to be managed as such. The future may bring unforeseen circumstances that mean amendment, variation or slight deviation from these plans is necessary. Ultimate responsibility for the provision of pastoral care within our diocese remains firmly vested in our bishop.

CONCLUSION

Pope Benedict XVI met with all the Bishops of England and Wales during the 2010 Ad Limina visit in Rome. In his final address to our bishops, the Pope spoke of the many signs of faith and devotion in our countries:

*//Even amid the pressures of a secular age, there are many signs of living faith and devotion among the Catholics of England and Wales. I am thinking, for example, of the enthusiasm generated by the visit of the relics of St Thérèse, the interest aroused by the prospect of Cardinal Newman's beatification, and the eagerness of young people to take part in pilgrimages and World Youth Days.//*⁷

The question we have sought to answer is 'How do we best organise ourselves so that the person of Christ may be seen and heard both by us and by those around us?' This is the living faith that the Holy Father points us to.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for us is to be willing to leave behind familiar patterns of 'being Church' and accustomed ways of 'practising our faith'. Whatever lies ahead we are called to embrace this change with a spirit of sacrifice, knowing that we are called to imitate our Lord who 'did not come to be served but to serve'.

May we be generous in our response knowing that the Lord is never outdone in generosity. As Jesus tells us:

*//Give and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.//*⁸



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⁷ Address to the Bishops of England and Wales, 1 February 2010

⁸ Luke 6:38

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISHES



*“O MY GOD
fill our souls with holy joy,
courage and strength
to serve you.*



*Enkindle your love in us
and then walk with us
along the next stretch
of the road before us.*



*We do not see very far ahead
but when we have arrived
where the horizon now closes down,
a new prospect will open before us
and we shall meet with peace. ”*

EDITH STEIN
ST TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS