**PUTTING OUT INTO DEEP WATER**

**30th May 2023 Askea Parish Centre**

**PARISHES IN ATTENDANCE:**

Graiguecullen and Killeshin, Cathedral, Askea, Bennekerry, Tinryland

Arles, Doonane, Ballyadams

**Welcome** - Bishop Denis spoke to all who had gathered to set the scene four our meeting and for this mission we are called to in putting out into deep water. He spoke of the decline in numbers of priests and priestly vocations as well as the decline in the attendance at Church of lay faithful. He highlighted that we have organised ourselves and the way we have operated as Church was no longer possible going into the future.

However, he reminded us that it is part of our collective baptismal calling to let the Holy Spirit speak to us in new ways at this time, as we explore how best to support one another in building the Church into the future. He ended by telling us that these meetings are but one chapter in a bigger story, and that we need to look after each other as we forge new identities as clusters of parishes, called to work more closely together.

**Diocesan Pastoral Council** – A member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council then gave an update of their work in supporting Bishop Denis over the last number of years. These meetings and subsequent gatherings come from the deliberations of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, as well as the Council of Priests in the Diocese.

**Purpose of the meeting:** The meeting was facilitated on Zoom by Jim Deeds and in the room by members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council. As we began, Jim set out the purpose of our gather as follows,

***This is a time of fellowship, prayer and conversation together. This is our first step on the way to ‘putting out into deep water’ together, going and growing where the Holy Spirit is leading us. In that way, our hope is that we leave feeling refreshed, energised, galvanised and a little clearer about where God is leading us.***

Further, Jim explained that the meeting would be structured around three questions to be discussed and one moment of prayer together.

**Guiding principles for our meeting**

* **Optimistic stance** – everyone we meet is doing the best they can with what they have at this moment in time
* **45 second rule** – there is very little that cannot be said in under 45 seconds. In other words, nobody will seek to dominate the conversation
* **St Paulinus of Nola** – ‘let us listen to all the faithful because in each one of them the Spirit of God breathes’. In other words, we will listen to and respect each other

**Q1** The map setting out your cluster of parishes represents one of our first movements ‘into the deep water’ as we seek to discover where the Holy Spirit is calling us to go and grow. When we see these new structures/ lines and when we hear what Bishop Denis has outlines, how do we feel? What do we think?

These are a cross-section of the answers we heard:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| It was good ot have this conversation | Happy to share resources and personnel | This could give rural parishes more support |
| Happy and excited for action now | We are all doing our best | We need to support each other |
| Clustering is really necessary | There is sadness and frustration and nervousness | Change is necessary |
| Will this affect our Masses? | We need more lay ministries | This is about much more than a map – it’s about people working together |
| Good communication is the key | The future we spoke of is now the present | We need a plan |

**PRAYER:** We prayed with Luke 5:4-7, a section of Scripture where we hear Jesus tell Simon to put out into deep water and pay out his nets for a catch. We spent time meditating on this piece and shared some of our thoughts:

The priests have been ‘fishing all night’, now it is the time for lay people to do the same

Let our nets down in new waters

God won’t lead us astray

This could be the right time to set out together to do something new

We need to trust God

Be brave, look forward

**Q2** We agreed guiding principles at the start of this meeting and they helped ensure we did the best we could. As we prepare to put out into deep water together, going and growing where the Holy Spirit would call us, are their principles that we should agree to that would guide our decision making?

* Do all through prayer, following Christ’s teaching
* Have a clear, shared vision and honest communication
* Have courage and show leadership
* Show respect and a willingness to compromise for each other
* Follow the Gospel uncompromisingly
* Remain hopeful, the Spirit will help
* Listen to each other
* Move forward with confidence and generosity of Spirit
* This is not all about structures – we are on a journey to God and we will find a way

**Q3** We are proposing that we meet again in September to keep our dialogue going and to make more concrete plans into the future. In the months between now and then, are there some action points that your cluster of parishes might want to agree to that would help us go and grow where the Holy Spirit is leading us?

**Graiguecullen and Killeshin, Cathedral, Askea, Bennekerry, Tinryland**

* A lay person will read out a communication about this meeting, using this report as a basis, at each church and all the Masses.
* There will be one shared edition of a newsletter for all the parishes
* A prayer of the faithful will be written and read in all the parishes over the summer, praying for this process.

**Arles, Doonane, Ballyadams**

* Hold a meeting of all PPCs in the cluster
* In time, hold an event between all the parishes in the cluster to increase understanding of what each parish has
* Share the report from this meeting

**Reflection on meeting:** Bishop Denis gave us some of his reflections from the meeting, saying that what stood out for him was the positivity and honesty on show. He commended the ideas that people had, remarking on how important communication is. He ended by reminding us to trust in the Spirit of God, who had been present with us this evening.

**Next Meeting: Wednesday 6th September at 7pm for tea and coffee, meeting beginning at 7.30pm**