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# Diocese of Cork and Ross



**Year of Prayer,  
Listening and  
Discernment**

*A reponse from  
Bishop Fintan Gavin*

*June 2025*



In September 2024, I invited you to join with me as priests, deacons, religious and people of the diocese to begin a *Year of Prayer, Listening and Discernment* as we listened together to how God is calling us to be his Church in this time.

During the year, following our information meetings, there was a series of gatherings in each of the *Families of Parishes* and also with religious communities and with our new Irish communities — as well as engagement with our school communities.

These gatherings were made possible through the generosity of our volunteer facilitators who worked with Eilís and Lorraine from the Office for Mission and Ministry.

Prayer has been at the heart of this journey. Thanks to all those who prayed our *Prayer from the Boat* at Mass each day and prayed in their *own personal prayer* that we would be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. I would encourage you to continue this prayer as we discern together the next steps.

I have read and reflected on each of the responses from those who participated in the gatherings. I want to thank you for your trust, openness and engagement. Just as you listened to God and one another, I too continue to reflect prayerfully on the depth and richness of what was shared.

**I** was struck by the hope that was expressed in the reflections. There was a remarkable unity across the diocese as to what God is challenging us to do, to work towards and to prioritise for this time. The commitment that people throughout the diocese have to their faith communities was very evident. It was heartening to see the huge regard and affection that you hold for your priests who serve you so generously. We have much to celebrate and to be grateful for.

You spoke in your reflections powerfully and clearly about the need to welcome and prepare those who are presented for Baptism with their parents and godparents into the life of Christ in his Church. This has major implications for how we prepare and celebrate the sacrament and live out its meaning in our lives.

The centrality of the Sunday Eucharist was continually emphasised. People called for a celebration that is spiritually nourishing, liturgically beautiful, emotionally welcoming, intellectually engaging and empowering enough that people leave strengthened to witness to Christ in the world. This presents a wonderful opportunity, but will require work and commitment from everyone.

Your passionate concern for young people and the future of our Church was emphasised throughout your responses. How we respond to this in today's culture can at times feel overwhelming. By engaging together with our young people – and investing in them – with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can begin to find new ways of inspiring young people to encounter Christ and become disciples in his Church.

While many see the fruits already emerging in our *Families of Parishes*, you

also voiced concerns—especially around the declining number of priests and the impact this may have on local communities. These are real and serious concerns.

There was also a deep and shared recognition of the importance of nurturing the gifts for ministry that each of us received in baptism, so that together we can enrich the life of our local faith community. The need for lay leadership was also strongly emphasised as was the formation that would be necessary to support these roles in our *Families of Parishes*.

There was an honesty in describing some of the significant challenges that are facing us all. Some may be expecting that it will be easy after this time of *Prayer, Listening and Discernment* to develop a detailed plan for the diocese. Others in our faith community may feel that their point of view has not been fully heard. Others may only be concerned about the future of their own specific local church.

**A**s we look ahead, it's clear that our journey of discernment is not over. We all need to discern together a way through the significant challenges and opportunities that we are facing. *Prayer, Listening and Discernment* need to continue. We must continue invoking the Holy Spirit. We need to continue listening to the Holy Spirit and respectfully to one another in our *Families of Parishes*. We, bishop, priests, deacons, religious, people, continue to make this journey together as a local Church in Cork and Ross.

A thematic summary of the responses of each *Family of Parishes* and the diocese as a whole can be found on the diocesan website ([www.corkandross.org](http://www.corkandross.org)). I would encourage you to pray and reflect on these summaries and what the Holy Spirit is telling us about our local Church and what we are invited to consider as our next steps.

To continue our journey together I invite priests, deacons, religious, and those who represented their parishes and faith communities at these gatherings, to join with me and the Office for Mission and Ministry at two gatherings which will be held in West Cork and the City in September.

Together we will consider the responses in more detail and what follow on initiatives may be taken to support you in your *Families of Parishes* to respond to these opportunities and challenges which you have outlined.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude for the generous and open way you engaged in this journey so far. Let us continue together to pray, listen and discern as we seek to build God's Church in this time and in to the future.

Yours sincerely in Christ.

✠ Fintan Gavin

Bishop of Cork and Ross

## OUR PRAYER FROM THE BOAT

(Mt 8:23-27)

Loving God, at baptism you have gifted us with a call to serve you and all people in all we do.

We ask you, Lord, to bless the people of Cork and Ross during this time of prayer and listening.

May we be attentive to the promptings of your Holy Spirit.

Open our eyes to see where you wish us to go in our faith communities and families of parishes.

Open our ears to hear the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leading us.

Open our hearts to follow you with joy and childlike trust.

Open our minds to new possibilities and ways of being your Church.

Fill us with hope and humility as we build the Kingdom of God together in our diocese at this time.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

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### Priesthood in Cork and Ross

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