DIOCESE OF SALFORD

AN INVITATION TO A DIOCESAN CONSULTATION IN 2015

PREPARING THE WAY ……..



My dear Brothers and Sisters in the Diocese of Salford,

In four meetings, 16th-19th December 2014, I met with most of the priests of the Diocese. At the meetings I spoke about my first intention being to learn about the Diocese; its priests, people and parishes; and the religious who contribute so much and also those social projects and activities that speak of the Gospel in action among us. I would like to repeat here some of the issues that I would like to see reviewed and discussed and I want to open up that discussion to all the people of the diocese (not just the priests and religious). I would like everyone to have the opportunity to express their views and speak of their experience. This will enable us to better judge the priorities for the next stage of our journey.

Since mid-January I have set out to visit the priests in their parishes and to gather their thoughts on what was said at the meetings. These visits are giving me an opportunity to see something of the Diocese and its social and geographical diversity. When all that is done which, realistically, will take me at least until May, I propose to consult more formally on a number of matters. That consultation – during Summer 2015 - will be open to everyone who wishes to take part. Then, I think, we will be well placed to make clear decisions.

So this document is, as its title says "Preparing the Way…" and is designed to help us all begin reflecting on the issues. Although the formal consultation comes later, any written responses you might like to make at this stage will be welcome by email to consultation@dioceseofsalford.org.uk or by post to: Wardley Hall, Wardley Hall Road, Worsley, Manchester M28 2ND



GOVERNANCE

For now, I will rely on the Bishop's Council and the Council of Deans to assist me in the administration of the Diocese. But there are significant questions about how best we can organise ourselves as a Diocese so that information can be properly discussed and decisions made.

The Bishop's Council comprises the Bishop with the Vicar General and the six Episcopal Vicars. We need to consider if this is a good forum for oversight of all aspects of work in the Diocese. The Council of Deans would assist in maintaining good channels of contact between the bishop and the priests around the Diocese, which in turn provides knowledge of parish communities. The Chapter of Canons have different responsibilities in different dioceses and we need to look at what ways the Chapter might work best in Salford. We also need to think about roles for a Council of Priests and a Council of the Laity and, realistically, how such bodies could be constituted so as to be truly representative. I am keen to explore the appointment of some lay diocesan trustees.

CARE AND WELFARE OF THE CLERGY

I have asked the priests of the Diocese to consider ways in which we might assist one another as priests and what is needed to form and strengthen our spiritual lives. I have established a Committee for Clergy Welfare which will be concerned with accompaniment for the sick and elderly and assistance in the transitional phases in retirement. One or more qualified and experienced people, with knowledge of Local Authority housing provision and healthcare will be part of this committee. Consideration is also being given to the need for Days of Recollection, the mentoring for newly ordained priests and the provision for a procedure for an informed handover of parishes. Consideration needs to be given as to the best way of promoting continuing pastoral ministry for those over the age of canonical retirement.

SAFEGUARDING

Good practices and procedures are in place but there can be no room for complacency. Parishes must be diligent in appointing parish representatives (more than one if convenient), and keeping up to date with DBS checks and training. There may be areas of safeguarding and awareness that need to be strengthened.

VOCATIONS

God calls us, but do we hear His call? We need to think about how we might best promote a culture of asking "What is my Vocation?" among the young people in parishes and schools. Or how we might plant the seed more directly in young people's minds that they have a vocation and they need to be asking what God wants them to be. We need to be aware of the process of discernment as to what sort of vocation a person might be called and how they might be directed.

THE AGE OF CONFIRMATION AND THE ROLE OF CATECHESIS

There is the experience of 25+ years in the Diocese of Confirmation at the age of seven years and it would be appropriate to reflect on that experience and see how things are working. The Bishops' Conference will be setting the parameters of age for Confirmation and we need to consider, within those parameters, what age we would want to promote. Whatever age is preferred we need to provide a

whole range of catechesis for our young people. It may be that better materials are available or that we have to consider who might best develop them.

PERMANENT DIACONATE

Salford Diocese stands alone in having no Permanent Deacons. The decision was made many years ago. We need to consider how circumstances have changed over that period and reflect on whether or not there is a role for this ministry in our Diocese. Certainly there are fewer priests available for pastoral ministry and that number will continue to decrease. Obviously we would need to establish some clarity about the role and office of a deacon and there will be positive experiences of other dioceses we might draw on for our consideration.

LAY FORMATION

Priests are ordained for specific ministries and sacramental celebrations. They should not be distracted by administration which can be done more competently by the lay faithful. We will need to look at how best to create Parish Leadership Groups even in the absence of a residential priest and consider how we can best provide training and formation for Hospital and Prison Chaplaincies. If people are to be asked to generously undertake lay ministry and administration, there must be an office or team to whom they can turn for advice and guidance, so we need to think about how this might best be organised and resourced.

YOUTH MINISTRY

The enthusiasm and the commitment of young people is vital for the future of the Church. Salford had a great tradition of Youth Groups in parishes. We need to look at how circumstances have changed and consider how best to encourage and enthuse young people to socialise together in the context of their faith. New initiatives are in evidence and need to be promoted. Perhaps there should be a diocesan team for youth ministry.

CONSECRATED LIFE

Consecrated Life has been a great gift to the growth and strength of the Church in this Diocese. The history needs to be celebrated with gratitude. We need to look at promoting the vocation to Religious Life now. We are just beginning a Year of the Consecrated Life and should consider how we might use the year to celebrate our experience.

EDUCATION

The Diocese has a great tradition of Catholic Schools and there are at present 208 schools in the Diocese. By choice, no Academies have been created. We need to be aware of any advantages in establishing an academy, even in exceptional circumstances and for a special need.

CAFOD AND CARITAS

Salford Diocese is seen as one taking a leading role in fostering the growth of Caritas. There is great work done in fostering knowledge of CAFOD and supporting its partnerships in development. This is the Gospel in action and the application of Catholic Social Teaching. We need to look at how we best develop and promote this.



ECUMENISM AND INTERFAITH

There are many well-established Ecumenical and Interfaith groups. All World Faiths hold so much in common: peaceful co-existence, sanctity of life, eradication of poverty, the dignity of human labour. Delegated representation to various groups is required. Progress is best in sharing our beliefs in social projects in our community. We should think about how best we might share common concerns with brothers and sisters of others churches and Faiths.

DIOCESAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Development Plan was adopted and some decisions made and followed though. There is need for a review and update of the plan amid changing circumstances. Priests and people need to work together to decide how clusters, amalgamations and closures might work and the priestly ministry be best distributed. There may be particular methods of consultation which would be most helpful in this task.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is vital as a tool of evangelisation as well as for wider information and education. There are thoughts of an office at Cathedral Centre with a Communications Officer. We may be able to draw on the expertise of people in the new Media City at Salford Quays. Websites need constant update and re-inventing. We need to think about how we develop a Communications Office and website and consider if we have the local expertise to achieve this.



WARDLEY HALL

There seems to be a strong consensus that Wardley Hall is at the heart of the Catholic Heritage of the Diocese, with its Catholic history and association with the Lancashire martyrs and the presence of the relic of St Ambrose Barlow. But I would like to explore in what ways the Hall might be used more widely, to be appreciated by more people.

Please reflect on these subjects. A consultation will be distributed through the parishes in Summer 2015. In the meantime, please use that prayer which will help us on our way:



Yours devotedly

+John