



From: Rt Rev Patrick O'Donoghue
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To all active priests of the Diocese

16 September 2008

Dear Father,

Fit for Mission? Youth

I appreciate that our all-encompassing *Fit for Mission?* Review is biting hard! However, evangelisation is paramount – the preservation of the Faith and the passing on of the Gospel. Church buildings and parish structures are only important in so far as they support and promote mission. The re-organisation, linking and merging of parishes are important but much more so the building up of a living and vibrant Church. Bishop Campbell and myself will be writing to you shortly about the above, outlining a preliminary strategy with regard to the implementation of the Review following the presentation of *The Final Proposals*.

Already a *Fit for Mission? Diaconate* Review Group is busy leading a consultation with Deacons, Priests, Parish Councils, and individuals from around the Diocese and beyond on how to strengthen the ministry of the Permanent Diaconate in the Diocese. The Marriage & Family Commission, too, are working hard and hope to release shortly an exciting and well produced new Diocesan Marriage Preparation Course.

On this occasion, however, my concern is Youth Ministry in the Diocese and the work of the *Fit for Mission? Youth* Review Group. Early in June you were notified of 2 events that require your active co-operation and engagement (Given their importance Bishop Campbell and I will be present for both) :

- 1. A meeting for Priests - Friday 26 September at Brettargh Holt (11.00am – 3.00 pm)**

This is a day for all active priests of the Diocese and it will be animated by the Youth Mission Teams of Hexham & Newcastle and Hallam Dioceses. The day will take place at Brettargh Holt on Friday 26 September, 11.00am till 3.00pm and lunch will be provided.

- **PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND THIS EVENT YOURSELF.**

Already I've had a series of apologies (as long as my arm!) – lots of 'farms up and down the Diocese are being sold', together with the important business of 'burying the dead' ...

Seriously, I expect all priests to be present for this and should like to be notified personally if you really cannot be with us.

2. Saturday 27 September at Brettargh Holt (10.30am – 3.30pm)

A sharing day for young people, youth workers, catechists, lay chaplains and all people who have a passion for youth ministry, animated by the Youth Mission Teams of Hexham and Newcastle and of Hallam Dioceses. The day will take place at Brettargh Holt on Saturday 27 September, 10.30am till 3.30pm and people will need to bring a packed lunch. Booking forms available on www.lancastercys.com or book direct with Kathy MacLeod on 01253 696442.

> PLEASE ENCOURAGE & INVITE INDIVIDUALS TO ATTEND.

We desperately need a youth strategy that is supported by every parish and school in the Diocese – a simple nod in this direction is not adequate. It must be a strategy that embraces fully every parish and school in the Diocese and shaped by our own young people. It requires your blessing and unequivocal support and enthusiasm, otherwise it will fail. To be brutally honest our *Fit for Mission?* parish review revealed that there is little or nothing happening for young people (15-21) in 80% of our parishes. I'm not being critical here but rather wanting to encourage everyone to make Mission with Young People a priority for all. Otherwise the future of our local Church would appear to be very bleak indeed.

We cannot achieve anything without the prayer and commitment of all in the Diocese and indeed the ideas, energy, investment and support of all the workers on the ground – priests, young people themselves, Confirmation catechists, youth group volunteers, lay chaplains is crucial for an effective strategy for reaching our young people and sustaining them in the Faith. All of us recognise that young people themselves have something special and unique to offer to the Church, without which we are all the poorer.

I look forward to seeing you (and your people) at Brettargh – your presence and cooperation is vital.

With renewed thanks for your commitment and continued support,

As ever in Christ,

Bishop of Lancaster