

Closing Prayer

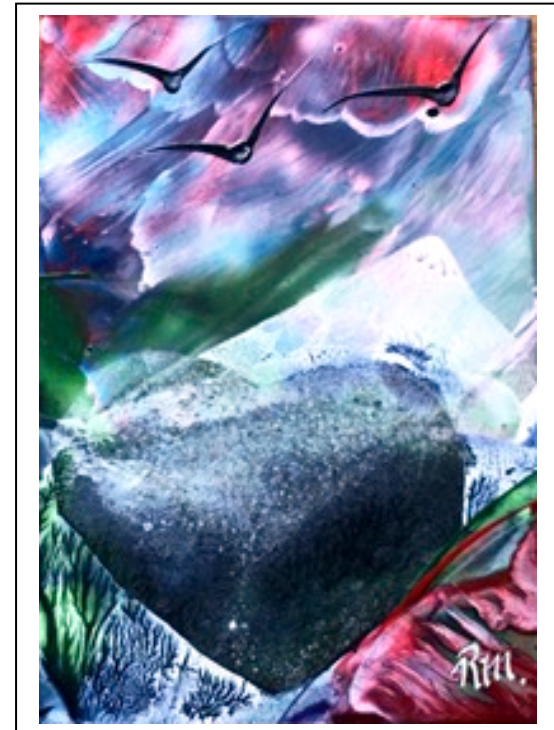
Loving Father,
We thank you and praise you for your presence
in our lives and throughout creation.
Help us to recognize your holy
presence all around us as we go
forth from this Holy Sharing,
and to find refuge and comfort
in you when we grow weary.
May we hold onto all we have learned
and experienced this week and
allow it to transform us into
the beloved community you call us to be.
We pray all this in Your holy name.
Amen.



Led By The Spirit

Sgir-Easbuig Earraghaidheal's nan Eilean

Diocese of Argyll & The Isles



Consultation Phase 1 – What is God's will for our diocese?

Gathering and Opening Prayer

God of love, we come before you as the Diocese of Argyll & the Isles, humbly seeking your guidance in determining our way ahead. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us, guide us and give us the grace and courage to go where you want us.

Cleansed and enlightened by your Holy Spirit may we follow in the footsteps of your beloved son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we stand at the crossroads and wonder what road to take, help us to discern the path you wish for us.

May we listen with an open heart and embrace your will.

Stir our hearts O Lord to consider what we can all do as individuals and be instruments of your Church's mission among all people using our talents. O Lord hear our prayer. Amen

Opening Hymn

Reflection

1, What have I done for Christ? I can place myself in the position of the two disciples, who, as the name suggests, have decided to follow Jesus and learn from Him. But as the scene opens they are downhearted and despondent, because it looks like their dreams have all come crashing down.

2, What am I doing for Christ? I am journeying with Him along the road, asking him questions, listening to Him and learning from Him. Are my ears open to His message? Will I invite him to stay with me, as the two disciples did?

3, What should I be doing for Christ? Can I say with sincerity that my eyes have been opened by His presence? Does my heart burn within me? If not, why not? What obstacles do I need to remove in order to appreciate Him more fully?

We listen to the story of the road to Emmaus.

Luke 24: 13-35

Let us focus on that story in four modes: participation, communion, mission and formation. Our Church needs these elements as it moves forward, journeying with Jesus and being enlightened by Him: Vatican II talks of "full, conscious and active participation". We participate when we welcome Jesus to journey with us, and allow that to transform into us journeying with Him, no longer walking my road, but his. We participate when we go to Mass and share in His Eucharist, again allowing Him to transform us from despondent, uncertain disciples into energetic and enthusiastic apostles, 'running back to tell the others what they had seen'

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We break bread together, and we recognise that the Eucharist is the central point of our faith. In a time of dwindling clergy, how are we going to ensure that this can remain? Whenever we gather for Mass we echo Jesus' words, "do this as a memorial of me". But Christ is also with us in different ways in our community of faith.

We are a missionary Church, journeying with Jesus and learning from Him. We are sent to the ends of the earth to proclaim the Gospel like all those who have gone before us with the same message, He is Risen! And missionary activity does not necessarily mean going overseas; we need it here, to re-engage and revitalise our own, often disheartened and despondent members.

Just as Jesus formed the two disciples, explaining and interpreting Scripture, teaching them about Himself, our task is the same; catechising people fulfilling the yearning in them for Christ, for the Sacraments, for the Gospels. There are many areas of ministry that are underused or remain untapped. This is a necessary and urgent task, so we must pray for the energy and ability to carry it out.

The Need for our Diocese to Discern God's Will

It is essential that as a diocese we discern together God's Will. Only then can we be truly *Led by the Spirit*. Over the past six years our diocese has conducted three periods of discernment which highlighted six consistent themes. This suggests that we have been collectively open to the Spirit's promptings regarding general direction. Therefore, this first phase of consultation will focus on these six areas:

- The desire for deeper spirituality (Universal Call to Holiness)
- Growth of missionary awareness
- Ongoing support/formation of clergy and laity
- Effective catechesis
- A more welcoming and open Church
- Greater transparency in governance

Explanation of the process

- Facilitator(s) read the question
- Meaningful exchanges between participants in small groups (or large group) about the question
- Report back from small group discussions (or large group depending on numbers)
- Process is repeated for each question
- Gathering of the feedback and summary
- Conclusion and sending forth.
- Summaries submitted to Diocesan Working Group to be collated

Questions

1. Universal Call To Holiness

How do we answer the call to holiness in a world filled with distractions, consumerism and indulgence?

2. Evangelisation

How can we grow as a missionary Church?

3. Catechesis - Teaching of the faith

How can we become more effective in teaching our faith in our homes and parishes across our diocese?

4. Formation of Laity and Clergy

a. How can we support our Lay people in living their vocation both in the Church and in society?

b. How can we support our clergy?

5. Transparency in Governance

In what ways is our Church transparent and how can we become more transparent?

6. A More Welcoming, Open Church - Optional

- *a. In what ways is our Church welcoming to all?*
- *b. Where do we fail to be inclusive?*
- *c. Who feels excluded?*
- *d. What are the obstacles to greater openness?*
- *e. How do we build the relationship with those who feel excluded?*

Explanation of the purpose

From Bishop Brian's Pastoral Letter (1st Sunday Advent 2022)

The Need for our Diocese to Discern God's Will

'As a diocese we need to discern together God's will'...'how does God want Argyll and the Isles to become more missionary?'

Challenges Facing Argyll and the Isles

'Depopulation, Reduction in Church attendance, Reduction in number of priests in active ministry-no seminarians. Finance-the Diocese and approximately one third of our parishes have cash flow problems. Scandals. Covid-19 -our challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic and cost of living crisis'

Hope

'No matter the challenge our Church was never extinguished but re-emerged, frequently with new mindsets and structures, but always purified and renewed'

Planning for Future

'Our central aim must be to discern God's will and not our own'

Consultative Stage: Three Separate Phases, shaped around Three Progressive Questions:

Phase 1: *'what kind of Church is God calling us to be in Argyll and the Isles today/How can we be more missionary?'*

Phase 2: *'What are our resources as a Diocese?'*

Phase 3: *'How can we best fulfil our mission with our resources?'*

'The method will be Synodal. By this I mean we will journey together prayerfully in an open, listening and reflective manner. Consultations will be held at parish level, Council of Priests and in several other ways. ..Discernment demands openness and courage....'

Guideline for our Sharing

1. This consultation is a safe place to talk
2. We will treat each other and what anyone says with reverence and respect.
3. One person speaks at a time.
4. We all listen with an open mind.
5. Our primary mode is dialogue: When we speak our purpose it is to advance the conversation. Please avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda.
6. We limit how long we speak so that everyone has time to share.
7. We only speak once so that everyone has had an opportunity to share.
8. We will be reporting the feedback from the consultation discussions to the Diocesan Working Group as they emerge without revealing the names of individual participants.
9. As participants, when we tell others of our experience of the consultation, we will not attribute anything we share to particular people or groups.