

5 MY COMMITMENT

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, Creator of the world and author of all that is good, we seek your guidance and inspiration as a Diocesan family. Give us missionary zeal in the renewal of our parish communities.

May the gifts of your Holy Spirit be the source of all formation. May our closeness to your Son Jesus, in prayer, in Scripture and in the Sacraments make us convincing heralds of the Good News. Bless our homes, families and schools with knowledge of your constant and compassionate presence.

As you shape our lives from the moment of our baptism, keep before our eyes the needs of our neighbour, and encourage us to know that your Kingdom is promised first to those who know their need for you, the ones Whom your Son chooses and calls by name. We make our prayer through the same Christ our Lord.

Amen

Prayerfully read and reflect on the passage...

Close with a simple prayer, concluding with an invocation of diocesan or parish patron saints.

'...pray for us.'

DIOCESAN VISION STATEMENT

Our Vision is to be a Catholic diocese which is faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, full of missionary disciples who work together co-responsibly in vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and neighbour.

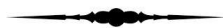
'Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.'

- Matthew 24: 45-47

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WORDS FROM ARCHBISHOP BERNARD

From the Diocesan Vision: *MY COMMITMENT...*



TO REFLECT ON

These words demonstrate a commitment to nothing less than a change of culture in our Archdiocese. While we may have a fantastic vision, or even a developed strategy for how we might go forward, it is often the culture of our parish or place that stifles our plans before they even start. This is why communicating vision is one of the first steps we need to take, and why the Archbishop has laid one out clearly for us to aim for.

With vision as the start – and an indispensable part – of this culture change, there may be structures that get in the way of our mission. The Archbishop has identified the Deanery as one example of a structure that he sees changing to serve the Vision, and he wants to see ways for clergy and lay people to come together co-responsibly, as another. Making our concern for young people and families *explicit goals*, should transform the way our ministries serve people too.

As our priests serve more and more communities, it is likely that Leadership Groups or Pastoral Councils need to be considered more broadly across the Archdiocese, to support the four areas mentioned above. In any case, there will be need for *leaders* to carry forward this culture change.

Culture can be a positive thing too, of course, and it will be important to discern which aspects of our parish or diocesan culture *encourage* our mission.

“I will be taking my own actions:

- I will ensure that priests, deacons, Religious and lay faithful are supported to work together in true partnership, being co-responsible, for the mission of the Church and deepening our relationship with God. Clergy and laity working side by side using their unique talents to create those vibrant and joyful communities.*

- I will put the structure of the Archdiocese at the service of our mission. This will begin with a reorganisation of our deaneries at the end of this year so they can begin to review how our parish structures can better support our mission and ensure that parishes are ‘fit for the future’ in all senses.*

- I will put young people and families at the centre of our diocesan planning. Working with and through our wonderful Catholic schools; we will listen to them and actively encourage and support them to use their talents in the life of the Church and build ever stronger relationships between our schools and parishes.”*

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ACTIVITY

To understand this idea of culture, read Appendix 5a – discuss what you read, what you agree/disagree with. Using Appendix 5b as a follow up, **make a list** of the 'cultures' that might need to change to encourage a missionary culture.

You can also revisit the 4 Areas document to see how we might exercise all of our ministries in, as Pope Francis urges us, 'a missionary key.' The following may be a useful image to describe what the Pope means – not necessarily that we do more, but to consider the way in which we do it.

'Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: "We have always done it this way"'

- Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 33



The Archbishop has called together four groups to advocate for the four themes identified in Part 4. The groups (*along with Young People & Families and Co-responsibility*) have been given the care of each area of the Vision, and more information about them can be found on the diocesan website Vision pages. Ask them how can they can support you!

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FOR PRAYER

What intentions for prayer have come from this week's discussion? Make a note of them. Perhaps pray for them here or use them during the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass.

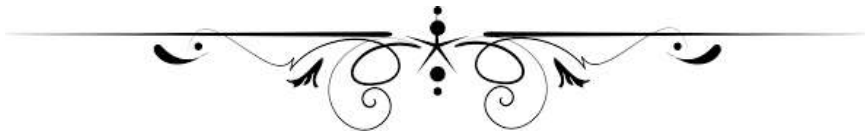
CLOSING PRAYER FOR THE VISION

S*pirit of God,
descend on me this day.
Grant me the Spirit of joy, to lift me,
the Spirit of hope to inspire me,
the Spirit of love to surround me and
the Spirit of truth to enlighten my path.*

*Holy Spirit,
I pray for a new outpouring of your grace,
so that I may grow in worship of your name
in love of you in my prayer
and in my actions towards others.*

*Come Holy Spirit into my life to guide me.
Strengthen and defend me,
so that I may be drawn ever closer to you.
Help me this day and always
to be a channel of grace
in all I say and do
and invite others into relationship with you.*

Amen



APPENDIX 5a

HOW YOUR CULTURE EATS YOUR STRATEGY FOR BREAKFAST

By Hannah Vaughan-Spruce (www.transformedinchrist.com)

You've heard the famous Peter Drucker phrase, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." When I came across this quotation, I felt that it couldn't apply more to Catholic parishes. Here's what I mean.

So many parishes are slowly waking up to the need to evangelise. Events like Nightfever have captured people's imagination and are taking place in inner city churches up and down the country. The number of parishes hosting courses like Alpha has sky-rocketed, so I'm told. The popularity of parish evangelisation teams is rising, which suggests that outreach initiatives must be becoming the norm in some parishes.

It all suggests that parishes are actually doing evangelisation, which – well, it's the Great Commission, so it's amazing. It is our mission and our deepest identity. That is until you realise, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

Culture is so powerful because it is invisible, unconscious and pervasive. It conditions the way we interact, behave and view situations and people. It is manifested in physical space and artefacts as much as in relationships and assumptions. We can't see it because we are part of it, and it is part of us.

When you enter a cluttered entrance to a church without any obvious indications of what to do or where to go, that is culture. When you walk into a church hall and people look up to see who has walked in but no one comes to greet you, that is culture. When people in the parish predominantly see their church attendance as part of their ethnic or cultural heritage, that is culture. When you arrive at Mass to find the majority of people sitting at the back of the church or at the end of a pew, that's culture. When you encounter people whose attitude is that the Church should be there primarily to serve their needs, whether a sacrament or a visit from a priest, that is culture. Weekly bulletins that use insider language and acronyms that mean something only to the initiated – yep, it's culture. A mindset that events organised by the church are for the retired only or those with nothing else to do – that's culture too. And when you would never consider bringing a non-Christian friend to your parish... you've got it... it's culture.

All of these examples, of course, are of anti-evangelisation culture. I think that, the more we keep evangelising – both individually and corporately in our

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parishes – our parish cultures will change. But not if our cultures don't defeat our evangelisation strategy first.

Occasionally I hear of a parish that runs Alpha maybe two or three times. After this, the numbers begin to dwindle, and then before they know it, they are running an Alpha course for maybe ten Catholic parishioners. After this, they give up. People will always say now, "Oh, we tried that and it didn't work." I would hazard a guess and say that the anti-evangelisation culture of the parish defeated the attempts to evangelise.

Or maybe you gathered a group with a great enthusiasm to organise extra hospitality at Christmas Masses. You pray for the extra people who will come, greet them at the door, give them a flier to take away with events happening in the new year. But extra people mean fewer car parking spots and places to sit. The pushback from other parishioners and lack of support from the priest is such that your team gets discouraged and loses their enthusiasm to do it the following year.

It is a perfect example of your culture defeating your strategy. Your team's evangelising subculture couldn't survive the wider anti-evangelising parish culture. It is like putting a freshwater fish into salt water. The environment is uninhabitable and it won't survive.

Strategising the Anti-Evangelisation out of your Culture!

- ***It starts with leadership.*** *I'm sorry, but it does. Unless your parish priest is leading the way, from my experience, culture is unlikely to change. Homilies are powerful, culture-carrying vehicles. They communicate whether the parish is about under-taking, care-taking, or risk-taking. So much flows from here.*
- ***Transformation happens through the power of the Holy Spirit.*** *It is the Holy Spirit who gives life back to the dry bones. No real and lasting change will happen without reliance on the Holy Spirit.*
- ***Small changes alter the tone.*** *It is amazing the impact of numerous small changes. Greeting people outside the church. An abundant approach to hospitality. Exploiting every opportunity to share personal testimony until it becomes the norm. Offering opportunities for people explicitly to take a step of faith – until this too feels 'normal'.*
- ***Be strategic.*** *Just because culture can swallow up your strategy doesn't mean you shouldn't have one. In fact you absolutely should. I would go far as to say, strategise the anti-evangelisation out of your culture! Having a strategy basically means planning how you are going to get where you want to be, with the resources you have. And so your strategy should be explicit about how you want your culture to change too.*

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APPENDIX 5b

Consider the culture and cultures of your parish and/or community. Do they support or hinder your evangelisation in the following areas, and how might they need to change? Perhaps you can think of others too...

Parish Welcome (in person or online)

To know and to be known (at church or online)

Deepening prayer and faith

Finding out about, and joining, groups

Invitation

Formation and training

Other: