

Report of the Diocesan Council of Laity Meeting

Held in the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation, Poringland

On Saturday 20 November 2010

Bishop Michael welcomed all representatives, especially Frs. Michael and Luke who came as observers; pastoral duties meant that both priests would need to leave after lunch. Tony Lawler chaired the Meeting and Patrick Linehan deputised for Ray Sykes as Secretary.

Apologies: There were 9 apologies for absence.
Approximately 35 Parishes sent a representative to this Diocesan meeting.

Matters Arising: Bishop Michael drew attention to the minutes of the May Meeting and to the report on vocations. He referred to the list of the many actions already being taken in the diocese in this regard. He stressed that the current level of vocations was not enough, indeed at least three times the current numbers were needed; and he urged the need for prayer. Delegates had no comments to offer other than those already recorded in the documentation arising from the May meeting.

The New Role of the Laity As an introduction to discussion on the main topic for the day, Bishop Michael suggested that all representatives would have received a copy of a document concerning Strategic Planning for the diocese. In a broad overview, he reminded the meeting that, in 2006, we were talking about Collaborative Ministry; at the forefront of our thoughts had been how we dealt with problems like the continued involvement of 'the same faces' in the majority of Parish support work; we were considering how to get more people involved in that work; we were advocating that more than simply mundane chores needed to be taken on by the laity; surveys of skills were recommended so that we could draw from, or develop, a pool of expertise in visiting people in their homes, in hospital and in prison.

Delegates might have expected the Strategic Planning document to inform the day's discussion. Bishop Michael asked, however, that attention should be focused closely and solely on the question of how we are to cope with a Diocese staffed by approximately 35 priests. In offering guidance to representatives in their deliberations, the Bishop asked the meeting to consider:

- 1 primarily, what new forms of Lay Ministry and service could be developed;
- 2 what further responsibilities deacons and others might assume
- 3 how lay people could be more involved with the life of parishes given how busy people are
- 4 how to fill gaps in Ministry
- 5 how to ensure the greatest use of priests concomitant with their need to live in parish communities which could offer them personal and spiritual support

Bishop Michael said that the meeting might feel that all of these issues had already been addressed but made no apology for suggesting that they needed continuous review as circumstances changed.

Bishop Michael's Report on this main topic is enclosed with these minutes.

Topic for 7th May 2011: Evangelisation – 'It's what the Church is for'.

The Meeting closed at approximately 3.00pm.