



## VOCATION MATTERS

SEPTEMBER 2017

### National Vocations Office

My name is Eric Cooney, I am the administrator for the National Vocations Office, which was established in July this year. I am very grateful to Fr. Willie Purcell (National Vocations Co-ordinator) and Bishop Cullinan, the Chair of the Council for Vocations for their support, guidance and enthusiasm.

By way of introduction to myself, I am a Permanent Deacon in the Archdiocese of Dublin. I am married to Denise and this month we celebrate our thirty-fourth wedding anniversary. We have two adult children. From a professional perspective, I have worked for the last forty years in sales and marketing in the technology and electronic payments sectors.



My role as administrator in the National Office for Vocations is for three days a week, reporting to Fr. Willie Purcell and Bishop Cullinan.

### Survey

Thank you to all who completed and returned the recent survey. There has been a good response. Almost 70% of those surveyed have returned the results so far. Some of the key feedback points comprised:

- There was 100% support for having regional meetings and for training on vocations promotion.
- Many requests expressed for professional, well designed materials (Posters, Pamphlets, Prayer Cards) for both hard copy and online (electronic) distribution. There were also requests for "YouTube" style videos for use on web sites and social media.

With regard to having sufficient time to promote vocations, feeling supported by priests in the diocese and the promotion of vocations on Diocesan Websites, the replies were quite varied.

In the forward of Fr. Brett Brannen's book 'A Priest in the Family' there is a lovely description of a vocation director:

*"It's helpful to know that the vocation director is not a recruiter. The Church does not want to steal your son. In fact the vocation director wants exactly the same thing as you – he wants the best for your son, which is embracing God's call, whatever it may be. His job is simply to help your son turn off the noise of life in order to hear the whisper of God."*



I like that image of helping someone to 'turn off the noise of life and hear the whisper of God'. The challenge for all of us is to create a culture of vocations, where vocations are both prayed for and encouraged from the parish level right through to the Diocesan Offices.

### Regional Meetings

Based on the feedback from the survey, it was agreed at the last Council for Vocations meeting to host a number of regional meetings around the country. The first regional meeting will be on 31<sup>st</sup> October in the Pallottine Retreat Centre in Thurles for all of the vocation directors in Munster. The meeting will commence with lunch @ 1pm and finish @ 4:30pm. We plan to schedule further meetings in early December and late January.



## National Vocations Training Knock, 24 – 28 June 2018

Further to the successful retreat for Vocation Directors in June by Fr. Brett Brannen, we have invited Fr. Brett back next June to run a 4 day training course for Vocation Directors any others who are involved in Vocations promotion in your diocese. The training programme will be commencing on the evening of Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June to lunchtime of Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

The training will be in the Knock House Hotel, Knock, Co. Mayo. The proximity of the Hotel to the Knock Shrine provides an ideal location to integrate both a professional and relaxing conference setting for our workshops, whilst easily benefiting from the prayerful settings in the shrine for Eucharist and Prayer.



Accommodation in the Hotel is limited. We have provisional booked 50 rooms. The cost for the hotel is €475 per person, full board from dinner on arrival on the Sunday to lunch on the Thursday.

Could you please let Eric Cooney know as soon as possible if you plan to attend and if you intend to bring anyone else from your Diocese.

## International Symposium Models of Priestly Formation 16 – 18 November 2017

In November the Faculty of Theology in St Patrick's College, Maynooth are organising an international conference on 'Models of Priestly Formation. Assessing the Past, Reflecting on the Present, and Imagining the Future' and an international list of speakers will address the theme.

The conference is *specifically* aimed at formators, vocations directors, bishops, and congregational leaders and others engaged in seminary formation. For further information including registration and accommodation details, please contact: [formationconference@spcm.ie](mailto:formationconference@spcm.ie)

## Vocations Camino

It is very early stages, but we are exploring the possibility of a "Vocations Camino" sometime in 2018. This would be an exciting opportunity for those considering priesthood to walk part of the ancient pilgrimage route of the Camino de Santiago to the tomb of St. James the Apostle.



The trek will provide pilgrims with the opportunity to step out of their ordinary lives, to dedicate some time to asking some of life's big questions, experience companionship, table fellowship and Eucharist. If this is something that you think would be of interest to you or the men that you are accompanying, please let me know.