

Giving Thanks for the Past – Funding the Future



Corpus Christi Procession 2016



Diocese of Elphin

Dear Parishioners,

The gift of faith is an invitation into relationship with God. It is an invitation which usually comes to us through our parents and grandparents. Here in the west of Ireland, where community is still very strong, I am very conscious of how our parish communities have supported people down through the years in living and celebrating their faith.



Faith is, indeed, a free gift, but the infrastructure of faith costs money. Many of our churches were built shortly after the Great Famine, by people who, out of the little they had, wanted to profess their faith in a concrete way. Today, in much the same way, our parishes are maintained in mission by the generous service and financial support of many committed parishioners.

I am conscious of the responsibility that I have to be accountable to our parishioners for the way in which we use the resources of the diocese.

Shortly after my appointment as bishop, I established a new Diocesan Finance Council, to assist me in the financial management of the diocese. The council is chaired by Bernie Butler, who has established and runs a very successful business in Sligo. Early in 2015, I appointed Tom Ryan as finance and development manager. His brief was to take on the day-to-day management of the diocesan finances and buildings, and to oversee the development of a new reporting system, which would bring the diocese into compliance with the new charities legislation. I am very grateful to all the members of the finance council for their valuable guidance. I now feel that I am in a position to give you a summary of the diocesan finances, which you will find on pages six and seven, and to outline some of the challenges facing us in the years ahead.

The Parishes

There are thirty-seven parishes in the diocese. In most of these parishes there are two or three churches. Each Sunday every Catholic family is invited to make an offering as an expression of their commitment to the parish. Those offerings help cover the running costs of the parish, including maintenance, heat and light, insurance, altar supplies, office supplies and staff salaries (if there are any parish employees). I join the priests of the parish in thanking all of you who contribute regularly and generously. One of the signs of your generosity is the excellent condition of most of our churches.

In most of our parishes, the weekly contribution is supported by approximately one third of the Catholic population. I am aware that we have been living through difficult times and, for that very reason, I am anxious that the burden of running our parishes would not fall unfairly on the few. It is true that some Catholics no longer practise regularly but it is my belief that most people still want the Church to be there for them, at least on special occasions. I would ask those who, for one reason or another, do not contribute regularly to review the situation and see if it is possible for them to share some of the burden of supporting their parishes.



Chrism Mass from 2016

The Priests

There are sixty-two priests in active ministry in the Diocese of Elphin. This includes thirty-two who are on loan from religious orders, missionary societies or other dioceses overseas, whose presence is essential to the provision of pastoral ministry at the current level. In addition, there are thirteen retired diocesan priests. On five occasions during the year, including Christmas Day and Easter Sunday, the collection taken up is specifically for the support of the priest(s) of the parish. Other sources of income include the offerings made on the occasions of Baptisms, marriages and funerals, as well as Station Masses where these exist, and donations in respect of Mass intentions.

The base income of priests currently stands at €20,004 for parish priests and €18,732 for curates. In addition to this, certain expenses such as health insurance and other operational costs are provided by the parish. Taking all of this into account, but not counting periodic maintenance of the presbytery, it costs approximately €30,000 per year to have a priest 'on the ground' in a parish.

In parishes where the income for the clergy exceeds the minimum amount, the priests provide sixty per cent of the surplus to cater for the needs of sick and retired priests, the on-going formation of priests, and the costs of the diocesan safeguarding programme.

In some of our parishes, however, the contributions, which are specifically destined for the support of the clergy, do not reach the minimum level. In those cases, the shortfall has to be paid from parish funds. By contrast with what may have been the situation in the past, most of our priests don't like talking about money and many of them would rather live without adequate heating than raise the question of contributions with parishioners. For that reason, I believe that it is important for me to flag that concern.

The Diocesan Administration & Central Services

Expenditure

The diocesan administration is relatively small and operates quite efficiently. Like most enterprises, the costs can be broken down into salaries and non-salary items.

A. Salary Costs

Six people are employed full-time in the central administration of the diocese. This includes the bishop's office, the finance office, the pastoral development office, the youth service and the safeguarding service. Five others work in a part-time capacity in the education advisory service and the safeguarding service and are paid expenses. Two people work in diocesan central services without drawing an income.

B. Other Costs

Non-salary expenses include the maintenance costs of the diocesan offices, as well as the ordinary day-to-day running expenses of a medium-sized office (heat and light, telephone, postage and stationery, insurances, replacement of IT equipment, etc.)

Under the heading of central services are also included the costs associated with:

- catechetical and administrative support provided for Catholic schools
- programmes run by the Pastoral and Faith Development Office
- formation of seminarians and candidates for the permanent diaconate
- vocations promotion
- support for the services of ACCORD in the Diocese of Elphin
- ministry to young people
- charitable contributions made by the diocese

In addition, the diocese has to pay an annual levy to provide for national Church services, including

ACCORD, the Catholic Schools Partnership, Cura, chaplaincies for migrants and for prisoners overseas and other offices and agencies of the episcopal conference which provide services to the diocese.

The running costs of the diocese for 2015, excluding exceptional (once-off) expenditure, amounted to €707,491.

Income

The running costs of the diocesan office, including central services, are funded by means of a levy on parishes, which is currently calculated at a rate of €13 per family per year, assuming that all Catholic families are contributing.

The costs of the safeguarding service and priests' welfare are supported by contributions that the priests make from their own personal income.

The income of the diocese in 2015, from all sources other than exceptional (once-off income), amounted to €528,962.

As will be evident from the above, the cost of running the diocese is significantly more than the normal income.

Other monies collected in the parishes for national Church collections (Trócaire, Mission Sunday, Peter's Pence, etc.) pass through the diocese, but these are revenue neutral. The total of what comes in is sent on directly to the agency concerned. For that reason, these amounts do not appear in our accounts as income. Permits for Church Gate Collections are issued by An Garda Síochána to the Charities concerned. These collections are not planned or managed by the Diocese or Parish.

Elphin Diocesan Trust Fund – Summary of Income and Expenditure – 2015

INCOME

Diocesan Office Levy (income from parishes)	€317,723
Contributions from priests' personal income to the Priests' Welfare Fund	€57,644
Contributions from priests' personal income to Stewardship Fund (Safeguarding)	€75,211
Investment Income	€51,222
Income for the Commissions and Agencies of the Episcopal Conference	€21,829
Other Income	€5,333

TOTAL

€528,962

EXPENDITURE

Salaries of four central office staff, including bishop	€124,704
Child protection and safeguarding costs (includes a part salary)	€88,710
Pastoral Development Office costs (includes a part salary)	€70,832
Charitable subscriptions	€18,050
Vocation committee costs	€8,220
General insurance	€8,942
Seminars, retreats, courses and meetings	€23,539
Cura contributions	€2,300
Permanent diaconate costs	€8,380
Seminarian and ongoing formation costs	€42,300
Priests' expenses – induction programme for incoming clergy	€23,464
Catechetics – primary level	€18,436
Catechetics and chaplaincy – secondary level	€45,913
Education management costs	€13,092
Property maintenance costs	€4,362
Diocesan Youth Office costs	€28,165
Other overheads	€120,272
Levy from the Episcopal Conference for National Commissions and Agencies	€56,801
Loss on Angelus Publication	€1,009

TOTAL

€707,491

DEFECIT BEFORE EXCEPTIONAL INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

(€178,529)

Exceptional Income (mainly disposal of investment, gifts and bequests)	€362,796
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Exceptional Expenditure (mainly from once-off property repairs)	<u>€229,305</u>
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NET DEFECIT FOR THE YEAR

(€45,038)

Those who wish to consult the complete annual audit reports for the Elphin Diocesan Trust Fund, or for the other associated charities (the Consolidated Parishes of the Diocese of Elphin and the Elphin Sick Priests and Welfare Fund), may do so on our website at www.elphindiocese.ie

The financial report for your own parish would normally be available from the Parish Finance Committee.

Summary

The good news is that the diocese is solvent. There are some savings which have been invested carefully. These are consistent with the size of the diocesan operation. Insurance costs and maintenance costs are high, especially given the number of churches which are listed as protected structures.

The reality is that we can continue, for the time being, to do what we are doing, but there are many other things which we should be doing, which we cannot do with the present level of funding. By way of example:

- We have come to depend almost entirely on our Catholic schools for faith development. We have now put in place a programme to train volunteer parish catechists, in much the same way that the candidate deacons are trained, so that adults too may be helped to grow in faith.
- Likewise, it has become clear that we can no longer depend on public funding for family support services. This may give us some freedom, but it also poses a financial challenge in responding effectively to a very real need which was identified in the recent Synod on the Family.

For all of these reasons, we need to increase our income from the parishes for central services. The fairest way to achieve this is by asking those who do not contribute regularly to play their part. We do anticipate, however, that there will also need to be a small increase in the parish levy from 2018.

I am grateful to all of you who, through your generosity, make so much possible. I ask you to please continue in your support for the diocese in the years ahead. You can do this by way of the regular weekly envelope, by way of an annual contribution, by means of a monthly standing order or indeed by remembering the diocese when you are making your will.



Elphin Youth Ministry, Croagh Patrick, May 2016

There is one other way in which you can help to ensure that the mission of the Church remains vibrant in the future. Just as you teach your children to pray, I would ask you to encourage them to participate in the family contribution, so that they develop a sense of responsibility for the future of their own parish.

I understand of course that some families quite genuinely cannot afford to make any financial contribution. If you find yourself in that position, please be assured that you are just as much a part of our diocesan community as anyone else. I ask you simply to remember the needs of the diocese and of our parishioners, young and old, in your prayers.

Wishing you every blessing in the year ahead

✠ Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin
March 2017