Dublin and Glendalough Diocesan Synod October 20th 2020.

The report to the Diocesan Councils : Ven. Neal O’Raw. Taney Parish Centre.

In proposing the report of the Diocesan Councils to the Diocesan Synods, I am conscious that the next six to nine months ahead of us, could be the most challenging ever, as we face the uncertainty wrought not only to this island, but to the world as a whole, by Coronavirus Covid 19.

It would be very easy in this report to just list off all our woes we have faced over the past nine months and the trials and tribulations we will possibly face in the near future, but that would be a cop-out.

It would also be disingenuous and unjust to all those who not only keep the fabric of this diocese alive but also promote and progress the kingdom of God here on earth.

This never seen before challenge requires us to listen, to learn and to adapt; enabling us not only to deal with the problems at hand, but also to plan for the future in meaningful and attainable goals.

As expressed in the report, we have to be creative and communicate that in a new and different manner. This new expression could be seen in how we do church, in how we reach out to children and young adults, to ourselves and to the more mature members of our community.

In this diocese we have already adapted in many such ways.

For example, many parishes are running Sunday school by Zoom.

The Diocesan Children’s adviser, Rev’d Cathy Hallissey, has enthralled many an excitable child with the adventures of her Orang-u-tan side-kick, Copperpot.

With many stories and inspiring tales, Rev’d Hallissey introduces varied themes and scripture to pastorally assist children in the confines of their own homes.

In the Dublin and Glendalough Youth Council, they continue their efforts to reach out to young people, working on various projects throughout the diocese. The project on the development of the Area Co-ordinator in the East Glendalough/Wicklow is working well, unfortunately due to Covid 19 the project was unable to continue in the North Dublin area, however, it is hoped to pursue and continue this project in the foreseeable future

I must commend the work of the teams who serve the four main universities.

Some would argue that our third level students, once they have tasted the freedom of university, that they have stopped caring about church and faith. This is proving to be incorrect.

Yes, because of the pandemic the social and relationship lives of the students have been largely taken away. Multiple data sources are showing that the mental wellbeing of young students is taking a big hit. It is being reported that levels of anxiety, low mood and inability to concentrate are at all-time high levels.

It is into this situation that our third level chaplains are playing a crucial role in pastoral care and practical support, not only to the students but also facility members.

At this point I would like to mention three diocesan initiatives in particular.

The first involves our hospital chaplaincy teams.

In most cases hospital chaplains no longer have access to patients in hospital wards, except in exceptional circumstances, including end of life situations. In a response to this situation, the chaplains developed a system whereby new admissions would receive a card containing a message from the chaplain and giving a number that the patient or a member of their family may contact the chaplain on to discuss any issues or concerns.

The second is the Gateway Project 2020.

At its centre a vision to promote pioneer ministry in the United Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough and under the Diocesan Mission plan 2020, three new mission pilot projects were approved for funding under Gateway.

The three projects; Disestablishment 150 retreat, ACT3 our Diocesan Anglican Chaplaincy Team and a new learning community for pioneer ministry; would be funded in order that they would help build the church in new ways by networking, by training, equipping and sharing, by talking together, releasing and supporting, and at the centre of it all, by praying and seeking God’s guidance.

The third and final initiative cares for those we value within our society, our children and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding Trust for children and vulnerable adults is a necessary and vital part of our church life. At all levels of the diocese, we are conscious of the ever changing and adapting regulations regarding Safeguarding Trust; and so may I commend for your attention the new dedicated Safeguarding website. Very user friendly and full of information.

Praise must also go to Robert Dunne and Olive Goode for their Trojan work in this field.

I would finally like to mention in dispatches, the Diocesan Communications Officer, Lynn Glanville.

Ever ready with her trusty camera and ballpoint pen, Lynn appears at almost every diocesan event, with a cheery disposition and yet a professional steele for getting that right picture for the diocesan magazine or website. This is all made no easier by the fact that Lynn resides in the interweb black spot that is South and West Wicklow.

And so it gives me great pleasure to propose the report of the Diocesan Councils to the Diocesan Synods

“That the Report of the Diocesan Councils to the Diocesan Synods of 2020,

and the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2019

be received and approved”