

In May last year I announced the creation of the Diocesan Mission Enabling Team. This small group of laity and clergy from across the parishes of the diocese, supported by a few specialist advisors, is helping set direction and priorities as we become an increasingly outward-facing Church in the East Midlands. With the three themes of Encounter, Discipleship and Mission acting as guideposts for this work of evangelisation, the team is seeking ways to foster and strengthen our culture of mission and evangelisation, grounded in prayer and openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Alongside the creation of the Team, the Trustees of the Diocese have established a Mission Enabling Fund. The Fund is to help parishes lead the people of our Catholic community into an ever-deeper Encounter with Christ, inspiring Discipleship and forming Missionary Disciples. It will be employed to equip and support the people of our parishes to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in bringing others to Encounter Jesus through their discourse and the witness of their daily lives – individually and as attractive, welcoming, Christ-filled parish communities.

The Mission Enabling Team sets the overall priorities on allocating Mission Enabling Fund resources. It also seeks funding applications from parishes and other diocesan groups, and reviews their submissions.

The Team currently meets monthly. It has developed its initial terms of reference, and the guidelines, procedures and forms for applying for financial support from the Mission Enabling Fund. To help develop these processes, it has reviewed several small projects, some of which have been approved for implementation. Examples of initiatives that will be rolled out in the coming weeks include:

- **Piloting a Parish Website Platform** to help parishes maintain a cost-effective online presence that is attractive, vibrant, current, informative, Catholic and missionary.
- **Piloting the 'Called & Gifted'** programme with a few parishes to help our people discern their God-given gifts and how to use them in His service.
- **Creating a media studio for production** of podcasts and videos by the diocesan community in support of the three themes of Encounter, Discipleship and Mission.
- **Producing a resource on the Mass** to support school staff, lay chaplains and clergy, who are involved in preparing Masses with children and young people.
- **Piloting resources for parents** that help them develop strong Catholic families.
- **Establishing a Diocesan Youth Forum** to give young people a stronger voice in the Mission of the Church across the diocese.
- **Piloting Youth Internships** to help young adults grow in their life of faith, develop skills and develop opportunities for service in the Mission of the Church

I now urge parishes to consider how this Fund can be used to support their own local Mission projects. Where you think you have a project that will help make us a more outward-looking and evangelising Church, please do apply for MEF funding. Application forms and guidance on how to apply can be found on the diocesan website here, via the Parish Hub (www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/parish-hub)

Seed funding of around £550,000 for the Mission Enabling Fund has come from the Diocese, mainly from reserves, but also from some unrestricted donations and bequests. This is enough to get our Mission Enabling Fund off the ground and so far around £20,000 has been committed to the projects listed above. But with around 130 parish church communities and numerous chaplaincies and other potential recipients, our ability to support projects is currently limited. The money won't go very far once the programme develops as we pray and hope it will. This is why we are now embarking on a major fundraising campaign following on from the consultation which we conducted last year. (www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/news/consultation)

The aim of the Enabling Our Mission Campaign is to raise £8 million in pledges over a three-five year period. This will help us greatly as we strive to ensure that as a Diocese, and individually, we can become more outward looking, more missionary. It will have a significant impact in helping our Diocese to invest more into our three key areas:

1. **Becoming more missionary in the parishes, chaplaincies, and schools** of our diocese, and giving people the tools to grow more confident in sharing their faith with others, in particular by providing ongoing finance to the Mission Enabling Fund.
2. **Alleviating the ever-growing administrative work-load of our priests** by consolidating more of the administration and so freeing up their time to be spiritual leaders
3. **Strengthening our local parish communities** by allowing them to retain a significant portion of funds raised so that their parish's physical buildings and infrastructure can be improved and made more inviting, and to invest in helping parishioners, according to local needs, to grow in their faith and develop opportunities for outreach in their local area.

The Enabling Our Mission Campaign began in February with the launch of a Pilot Phase which includes five parishes – Good Shepherd and St Anthony (Woodthorpe and Calverton), The Most Holy and Undivided Trinity (Grimsby, Immingham and Cleethorpes), Our Lady of Good Counsel (Leicester), Sacred Heart and St Margaret Mary (Leicester) and Nottingham Cathedral. I would like to thank the clergy in the Pilot Phase for their participation in this vital initiative.

It is my belief that this project provides an opportunity to make a lasting impact on our parishes through active charity, lively hope, and the ever-deepening of our faith. Please keep the parishes in your prayers.

+ Patrick

Friday 1st March 2024