

## Pastoral Letter for the Second Sunday in Easter 2016



**Peter**

BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND FAVOUR OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE, BISHOP OF WREXHAM

TO

THE CLERGY AND THE CONSECRATED AND LAY FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

*Health and Benediction in the Lord*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of the most wonderful passages in the Gospels is S. Luke's account of the disciples on the journey to Emmaus and their encounter with the risen Jesus (*Luke 23:13-35*), for not only does it provide us with one of the resurrection appearance stories, but tells us too of the early Christian community's Eucharistic practice and liturgical form. That in turn demonstrates the process which each of us is to make in our spiritual and religious lives. That journey takes us from questioning where we are and what is life all about; through being evangelized, to belief; to sharing that which is at very heart of our faith, the Eucharist; to telling that which we know, and strengthening others in the community and helping them in their desire for the fullness of faith. That process is what puts meaning into the word 'parish' and takes it beyond just being a territory or particular group of people. (cf. *Can. 515§1*)

'The parish,' Pope Francis reminds us, 'is not an outdated institution precisely because it possesses great flexibility; it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community.' (*Evangelii Gaudium 23*). At this time and for the foreseeable

future we are all deeply aware of the need to use that 'flexibility', and with 'openness and missionary creativity' to remodel the parishes and the Diocese.

Over the past months, indeed years, I have written documents, articles and letters, prepared plans and protocols; been having conversations, preaching and speaking, praying and reflecting upon a way forward for the Diocese, bearing in mind the position we now find ourselves in with regard to the number of people who now attend Mass, the number of churches we have and the number of priests to serve them, and have come up with a solution for the future. From this weekend that plan, which has been discussed with the Priests' Council with whom Canon Law requires me to consult, comes into effect. To some it will be shocking, to others not radical enough; to some it will come as a relief, to others a disappointment or even a scandal; to us all it will be a challenge, but I firmly believe also a huge opportunity for renewal. It will mean pastors and communities will have to look afresh at how we live parish life, how the Catholic Church in North Wales is profoundly missionary.

Returning for a moment to the disciples on the road to Emmaus who were transformed as the scriptures were opened for them; we must immerse ourselves in the reading and reflection on the Gospels, particularly on our own, with others, and in the Liturgy. As the disciples recognised Jesus in the breaking of bread, we must commit ourselves to keeping the Lord's Day -the day of Resurrection- holy in our participation of Sunday Mass. Like the disciples, we are to share the joy of knowing the risen Lord Jesus with our fellow Catholics and Christians, as well as the 'preaching that falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. ... bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers.' (*Evangelii Gaudium* 127).

Churches are going to be closed and I hope some new ones built; parishes are going to be suppressed and new ones established, and some Mass times will be altered. Not all of this will happen at once, but some of it will happen immediately, ie. within weeks. I said at the outset of this reorganization and restructuring, my intent was to ensure that in each of the remaining churches of the Diocese Sunday Mass would be celebrated every Sunday of the year. On present calculations, by 2020 the number of under-retirement-age priests will be 22; therefore to achieve my intention there need be around only 40 churches, not the 62 there currently are. Many of the details and

consequences of closures and reorganization cannot be worked out beforehand and can only be faced in the reality of the new situation, and so I ask you to approach this with a generous heart and steadfast faith. The disciples on the road to Emmaus began their journey downcast and dis-spirited thinking their world had come to an end with the death of Jesus their friend and teacher and indeed their hope. And it had, but what a new beginning they had when, through the scriptures and the breaking of bread, they truly encountered their risen Lord.

Either from your parish priest or on the Diocesan website you will be able to read again this letter as well as the previous documents I had prepared, *Into the Future 1 & 2*, but as a number of postscripts to this letter I give the details of the changes over the next few weeks in each of the existing Deaneries of the Diocese. There will need to be parish meetings and decisions made about names of new parishes, cooperation about new Mass times, support of your priests as they come to terms with new arrangements; and brother priests and deacons support of your people as they understandably grieve over what is lost. For all though, this is both a time of remembering and thanksgiving for those from whom we have received the faith, their endeavours and their sacrifices. In each of the churches that are to close I will celebrate a final Mass of thanksgiving for all our benefactors in faith and goods.

Where there are just changes or re-alignment of Mass time within Deaneries these will be effective on and from Pentecost weekend, that is 14th /15th May 2016. In the meantime I commend to you again my Eastertide challenge of reading part of S. Luke's Gospel each day.

Be assured of my continued prayers for you, your families, and the Diocese.

† Peter

Bishop of Wrexham

*Given at Wrexham on the 31<sup>st</sup> March in the Year of our Lord 2016 and to be read in the Churches and Chapels of the Diocese of Wrexham at all Masses of the Second Sunday of Easter 2016.*

## Pastoral Letter for the Second Sunday in Easter 2016

### Postscript for Wrexham Deanery

#### Immediate

1. As specified in *Into the Future -2* there is the need to formalise the current arrangement with regard to Holy Spirit, Newtown and S.Richard Gwyn, Llanidloes in the creation of a single new parish. Name to be determined and precise boundaries defined.
2. As specified in *Into the Future -2* there is the need to formalise the current arrangement with regard to S. Anne's Wrexham and Our Lady & the Welsh Martyrs, Overton in the creation of a single new parish. Name to be determined and precise boundaries defined.

#### Intermediate

3. Amalgamate and create single parish comprising the current parishes of Newtown/Llanidloes and S.Winefride, Welshpool.
4. Appraisal for a new church build in Rossett and with the closure of Llay.

#### Long Term

5. Close church in Llanidloes
6. Develop Newtown with a new church or an acquisition.

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### Postscript for Colwyn Bay Deanery

#### Immediate

1. As specified in *Into the Future* -2 there is the need to formalise the current arrangement with regard to S. Michael, Conwy, Holy family, Llandudno Junction and S.Mary of the Angels, Llanfairfechan.
2. Cease 9.30am Mass at Colwyn Bay

#### Intermediate

3. Amalgamate and create single parish comprising the current parishes of S.Joseph, Colwyn Bay and Sacred Heart, Old Colwyn.
4. Consideration of closing Sacred Heart as Sunday Mass centre.
5. Amalgamate and create new parish Llandudno Junction/Conwy/Llanfairfechan and Good Shepherd, Llanrwst
6. Close church in Conwy

#### Long Term

7. Close church in Llanfairfechan

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### Postscript for Caernarfon Deanery

#### Immediate

1. Amalgamate and create single parish comprising the current parishes of Our Lady & S.James, Bangor and S.Helen, Caernarfon.  
Priest resident in Bangor.
2. Close S. John Jones Llanberis
3. Close S. Richard Gwyn & S.Pius X, Bethesda
4. Cease Sunday (Vigil) Mass at Ysbyty Gwynedd
5. Amalgamate and create single parish comprising the current parishes of S.Joseph, Pwllheli and Most Holy Redeemer, Porthmadog  
Priest resident in Pwllheli.
6. Close The Resurrection of Our Saviour, Morfa Nefyn
7. Mass in S.Garmon, Abersoch only if there is a visitor priest, otherwise all attend S.Joseph, Pwllheli.

#### Intermediate

8. Cease Sunday (Vigil) Mass in Holyhead freeing priest for Mass enabling there to be at least one Mass in each of the three parishes in the Island Mission.
9. Close S.David, Cemaes Bay
10. Close S.Garmon, Abersoch

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### Postscript for Dolgellau Deanery

#### Immediate

1. As specified in *Into the Future* -2 there is the need to formalise the current arrangement with regard to Our Lady of Fatima, Bala and Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, Dollgellau.
2. As specified in *Into the Future* -2 there is the need to formalise the current arrangement with regard to S.Mair, Machynlleth and S.David, Tywyn.
3. Close Aberdyfi
4. Amalgamate and create single parish comprising the current parishes of Most Holy Redeemer, Porthmadog and S.Joseph, Pwllheli  
Priest resident in Pwllheli.
5. Close Holy Spirit, Criccieth
6. Cease Sunday Mass at S.Mary (Ch.in Wales) Beddgelert

#### Intermediate

7. Amalgamate and create new parish of Bala/Dolgellau with S.Tudwal, Barmouth.
8. Amalgamate and create new parish of Blaenau Ffestiniog/Gellilydan with S.David in Seion, Harlech

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### Postscript for Fflint Deanery

#### Intermediate

1. Amalgamate and create new parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, Buckley and S.David, Mold.  
Priest resident in Mold.
2. Feasibility of new church in Connah's Quay
3. Close Holy Trinity, Queensferry
4. Feasibility of new church in Broughton

#### Long Term

5. New Church in Connah's Quay
6. New Church in Broughton
7. Close S.Anthony, Saltney
8. Close Sacred Heart, Hawarden

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### Postscript for Rhyl Deanery

#### Immediate

1. Amalgamate and create new parish of S.Joseph, Denbigh and Our Lady Help of Christians, Ruthin  
Priest resident in Denbigh
2. Feasibility of extension of Ss.Peter & Frances, Prestatyn

#### Intermediate

3. Amalgamate and create new parish Denbigh/Ruthin with S.Winefride, S.Asaph.  
Priest resident in Denbigh
4. Amalgamate and create new parish of Rhyl or Prestatyn with S.Illtyd, Rhuddlan
5. Reduce to one Sunday Mass in Rhyl
6. Reduce to one Sunday Mass in Ruthin.