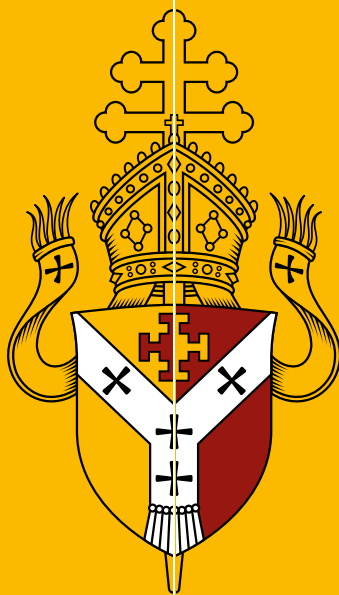


“Behold,
I am
making
all things
new”

Revelation 21:5



An invitation



Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham

Reflect with me

I am delighted to welcome you back to church and to share our vision for the unfolding of God's plan in the Archdiocese.

With all the hardships we have endured over the last year, we are learning to deepen our trust in God's loving care and to respond in ways that show we care for each other. For many, it has also taught us to value things differently and to focus our minds on what really matters.

We have had the opportunity to reflect on our faith and on the role our churches play in society. We are now making a fresh beginning in a very different setting, and as we reflect on Pentecost we pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us and inspire us as we rebuild our Church.

We know that together we can overcome any challenges and continue to support the Church's mission in the months ahead, working with God as our guide. We must take this opportunity to do all we can to make sure the Gospel is seen and heard through the example of our daily Christian lives.

I invite you to reflect on the words in the vision statement:

Our vision is to be a Catholic diocese which is faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, full of missionary disciples who work together co-responsibly in vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and neighbour.

I invite you to talk to your family, friends, teachers, fellow parishioners and parish priest about what the words mean to you and how they may help to shape your individual and collective choices and decisions.

Make a powerful change

I believe that this is an opportunity to focus on renewal here in our Archdiocese – being open to change. I am excited about helping to create a future full of missionary disciples, with clergy and lay faithful working together to create vibrant and joyful communities serving God and neighbour. I want us to look at how we will individually respond to God's call to be missionary disciples in the Church and in our local communities, working joyfully to spread the Word and the work of God. In essence, how will we unfold God's plan for our Church.

To prepare for this change I have commissioned groups who are looking at how we work in our parishes and in the Archdiocese to increase the opportunities

which enable us to do God's work and to fulfil the promise of our baptism.

There are four areas I am asking us all to focus on:

Evangelisation – Encouraging others to know God's love for them by inviting them to church, to pray and to encounter Christ, and to groups where they can learn about Him. Forming missionary disciples and missionary parishes.

Formation - Growing leaders in our churches, schools and parish communities, by providing both spiritual and pastoral formation and support, to help prepare us for new roles. Helping you to understand more about your faith in order to deepen your personal relationship with God.

Liturgy and Worship - Invigorating and deepening our worship and sacramental celebrations so that we share in, and radiate, the divine life of God. Encouraging others to join us in prayer to our Heavenly Father.

Social Outreach - Building up the common good through our charitable outreach in the giving of our time, our resources and our love to those who need it most. Inviting others to join us in our charitable work.

Look with fresh eyes

I ask you to reflect on these four areas - do you feel more strongly about one than another? Maybe God is calling you to use your talents there? I ask you to consider how you might put those gifts into action in service of the Church.

I will be taking my own actions:

- I will ensure that priests, deacons, Religious and lay faithful are supported to work together in true partnership, being co-responsible, for the mission

of the Church and deepening our relationship with God. Clergy and laity working side by side using their unique talents to create those vibrant and joyful communities.

- I will put the structure of the Archdiocese at the service of our mission. This will begin with a reorganisation of our deaneries at the end of this year so they can begin to review how our parish structures can better support our mission and ensure that parishes are 'fit for the future' in all senses.
- I will put young people and families at the centre of our diocesan planning. Working with and through our wonderful Catholic schools; we will listen to them and actively encourage and support them to use their talents in the life of the Church and build ever stronger relationships between our schools and parishes.

Make a pledge to pray

I will be sharing more about these plans and the part we will all play in the coming months. You can also find out more by going to our website:

www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/vision.

For now, in preparation, I will be praying about all that is before us as we step out on this pilgrimage of faith. I ask you to pray the vision prayer on the back of this leaflet with me as we plan the way ahead, to strengthen your faith with a new action.

Next year we will be supporting parishes with more training, resources and events to help us all take more steps towards our mission to serve God and to grow our Church.

The Diocesan Vision: Unfolding God's Plan

Our vision is to be a Catholic diocese which is faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, full of missionary disciples who work together co-responsibly in vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and neighbour.

www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/vision

Prayer for the Vision of the Archdiocese

Created by the Liturgy and Worship group.

Spirit of God,
descend on me this day.
Grant me the Spirit of joy, to lift me,
the Spirit of hope to inspire me,
the Spirit of love to surround me and
the Spirit of truth to enlighten my path.

Holy Spirit,
I pray for a new outpouring of your grace,
so that I may grow in worship of your name
in love of you in my prayer
and in my actions towards others.

Come Holy Spirit into my life to guide me.
Strengthen and defend me,
so that I may be drawn ever closer to you.
Help me this day and always
to be a channel of grace
in all I say and do
and invite others into relationship with you.

Amen

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An invitation



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM