



# THE NORTHERN PASTORAL NETWORK

ARMAGH - CLOGHER - DERRY - DOWN & CONNOR - DROMORE - KILMORE - RAPHOE - SOCIETY OF AFRICAN MISSIONS

MAY 2023

The Network met again in Kelly's Inn, Garvaghey, Ballygawley on Wednesday 10 May 2023

1. The very favourable response from the bishops in the Network's catchment area to the recent annual request for financial support was acknowledged and gratefully received.
2. Those present reviewed the Network's Annual Retreat in the Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre, Newry, Co. Down which took place on 18/19 April 2023 and was facilitated by Noirin Lynch, Director of the FCJ House of Spirituality in Spanish Point, Co. Clare. Those present who participated in the retreat felt that it was a very worthwhile experience, and good for body, mind and spirit. There were initial discussions regarding dates and venues for the 2024 retreat.
3. There was a long discussion on developments regarding the ongoing synodal process. Reference was made to the "Moment of Marian Prayer" on Wednesday 31 May next – the Feast of the Visitation and the last day of the Marian Month of May - at Knock Shrine to place the work of the Synod, especially the upcoming assembly in October, under the protection of Our Lady. This has been organised in response to a request from Pope Francis to local Churches for such an initiative.
4. Best wishes for a safe journey as well as for a spiritually-enriching and memorable experience were extended to all those from across the Network's catchment area who are travelling to Lisbon for the World Youth Day in July as well as to those travelling to Knock Shrine for the "World Youth Day (at home)" celebrations on Sunday 30 July 2023.
5. Those who attended the meeting discussed training for Parish Ministry at Times of Bereavement and Loss. Thanks were extended to Paula McKeown from Down and Connor's Living Church Office who shared details of the diocesan programme in her diocese and who offered to run a 'Train the Trainer' day for the dioceses in the Network once the first course has been completed and reviewed. The view was expressed that it would be great to have some degree of conformity across the dioceses in this regard with the capacity to fine-tune it to meet local needs and expectations.
6. There were initial discussions regarding the future direction of the Network and developing a strategy for the time ahead. A suggestion was made that the Network should engage more with the bishops in the Network and various options were explored, including making a presentation to them at one of their regional meetings or inviting them to attend a Network meeting. The positive value of the Network and how it has developed over recent years was noted as was the fact that it is the only one of its kind in Ireland. The development of resources for November and Advent/Christmas was welcomed as was the mutual sharing of resources, advice, support and experiences.
7. The Network noted that the National Year of Prayer for Vocations to the Diocesan Priesthood was now underway. Congratulations were extended to Fr. Carlos Estaban Rojo who was ordained recently by Archbishop Eamon Martin for service in the Archdiocese of Armagh. Also remembered were those priests, permanent deacons and a permanent deacon in training who had passed away to their eternal reward in recent times.

Tributes were paid to Sr. Anne Lyng (Armagh Diocesan Pastoral Worker) who is embarking on a sabbatical at the end of June 2023 and was a long-serving and valued member of the Network.

The remaining meetings of the Network for 2023 will take place in Kelly's Inn, Garvaghey, Ballygawley: Wed 20 September 2023 & Wed 8 November 2023

**Northern Pastoral Network**  
[www.northernpastoral.network](http://www.northernpastoral.network)