What is the Lord Calling Us to Be and Do?

A Synodal Vision for the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

As disciples of Jesus in the Church of Hexham and Newcastle, listening to His invitation, we feel called to make the following commitments:

Commitment 1: *Walking with Jesus and enabling encounters with Him.*

"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? … and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread." (Luke 24:32,35)

We have confidence that the Spirit is at work in our Diocese and that the encounter with the Risen Lord is the heart of our life together. As we receive God's saving love in our lives, we offer that love to others. We are called to:

- Continually renew and nourish ourselves through Jesus' gift of Himself in the scriptures, the sacraments, and the richness and diversity of the Church's liturgy, including:
  - Participating regularly in the Eucharist and most particularly when the whole community gathers.
  - Setting aside time for personal and communal prayer allowing the Lord the opportunity to guide us. Continuing our strong Catholic tradition of prayers before the Blessed Sacrament.
  - Celebrating and receiving the gift of the Lord's forgiveness and mercy, which continues to be offered through the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Be welcoming to all comers and make this a priority in our individual and communal ministries.
- Be a generous people that gives witness to God's love and mercy by accompanying one another in times of suffering and struggle.
- Develop confidence as individuals and as a community to witness to our faith in our daily lives.
- Work with our sisters and brothers in Christ in other communities, giving shared witness to the love of the Lord.

For holiness and sharing Christ with others, St Aidan, pray for us.

Commitment 2: *Living Justly and caring for our common home.*

"…what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

Jesus identified himself with the poor and those rejected by society. He came to proclaim good news to the poor and commands the Church to continue His mission. We are called to:

- See Christ in the poor and marginalised; to have a preferential option for the poor as we seek to make God's love present in practical, concrete ways.
- Respond to the cry of the earth and care for our common home by living and ministering sustainably. To be advocates and stewards for climate and biodiversity justice.
- Be advocates for social justice at home and abroad, living and ministering in accordance with Catholic Social Teaching.
- Listen to, be changed by, and amplify the voices of those who are marginalised.
- Be advocates of human rights that flow from and uphold the dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God.
- Work against racism, misogyny, homophobia, and all other prejudices which attack human dignity and weaken the body of Christ.
- Work with our sisters and brothers of all faiths and none to live justly and care for our common home.

For justice and care for our common home, St Cuthbert, pray for us.

Commitment 3: *Growing as one Diocesan family.*

"… that they may all be one" (John 17:21)
"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." (1 Peter 3:8)

To be the Lord's missionary disciples, we must be disciples in communion with Christ and one another. We commit to embracing the power of working together: enabling the wisdom and expertise of the lay faithful, the unique pastoral ministry of priests and deacons, the charisms of the religious, the expert service of diocesan employees, and the skills and experience of our trustees to contribute to the flourishing of our communities. Discerning new, collaborative ways to walk together is vital to the life of our Diocese. We are called to:

- Grow as one diocesan family, increasing our understanding of each other's lives, faith, and vocations. We particularly recognise the need to attend to the voices of those most marginalised and wounded by the Church.
- Rebuild trust by listening to the Holy Spirit in prayer, accompaniment and synodal discernment.
- Work together to establish a culture in which our churches are safe places, especially for children and those who are vulnerable for whatever reason. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all.
- Establish a culture whereby our wounds and struggles are acknowledged, our concerns explored, and our voices listened to with respect.
- Resolve differences through just processes that are in keeping with Gospel values.
- Be generous in offering our personal gifts and talents to serve our local communities and the wider diocesan family.

For wisdom, unity and discernment, St Hilda, pray for us.

Commitment 4: *Being formed by Christ and one another for mission.*

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go... Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest." (Luke 10:1,2)

As a diocese, we are committed to the importance of formation for all the baptised throughout the whole of our lives so that we may all grow in our shared vocation to holiness and evangelisation. We are called to:

- Be open, as lay and ordained people, to being formed by one another as we discern new ways to be co-responsible for mission.
- Give special attention to the accompaniment and formation of young people and their families, being open to being guided by them.
- Value, support and develop the active service of the laity. Recognising that formation is vital for the flourishing of people's faith and for developing particular ministries in the Church and the world**.**
- Work together to enable bishop, priests and deacons to be centred daily on the preaching and teaching of the Gospel and the sacramental life of the Church; offering support and formation to maintain their well-being, fellowship and ongoing development.
- Build ever closer connections between home, parish, schools, chaplaincies, and our youth services, and share resources and expertise.
- Discern the development of appropriate ministries and structures in a changing context, being intentional and specific about our formation needs at both diocesan and parish level.

For knowledge, understanding and evangelisation, St Bede, pray for us.

These priorities are interwoven and interconnected. There is no true formation without encounter, no growth in communion without justice, and no healing of relationships, which does not also draw us closer to the Lord.

We entrust the future of our diocesan family to our patron,
Blessed Lady Immaculate, pray for us.