

The Way Forward

A 3 YEAR PLAN FORGING LINKS BETWEEN SCHOOLS, PARISHES AND HOME,
ENABLING YOUNG PEOPLE TO FORM A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

December 2020

Introduction by Bishop Denis Brennan

The Way Forward has been a collaboration of many ideas and youth ambitions by our clergy, lay parishioners, teachers, and of course our young people. Although Ireland, and indeed the world, has been in a 'virtual' lockdown this year, it was instrumental in providing the space to formulate a plan that would cohesively gather these ideas and long-term ambitions beneath the umbrella of Ferns Youth Ministry.

Within the Diocese of Ferns, we have long been curtailed by our history of abuse which resulted in the ceasing of all youth ministry until perpetrators were brought to justice and a safer environment was established. Fifteen years later, and nearing the end of my own administration, I am delighted to introduce this document as a mechanism by which we can enable our young people to form a personal relationship with God.



In launching *The Way Forward*, we chose to build a Star. A Star that would be seen from miles away as a message of hope to our young people that God *is* the way. As we prepare to install this Star on the top of St Peter's College in Wexford, it struck me as quite significant that we are launching this initiative in December of 2020.

Firstly, it is the season of Advent, a time of waiting. For the Diocese of Ferns, youth ministry has been waiting. Although there have been such wonderful faith opportunities as the annual trip to Lourdes and World Youth Day, these opportunities were only open to a small minority. This Star is a symbol that says to *all* young people, '*you do not have to wait any longer.*'

The second significant reason is due to the challenging pandemic year of 2020, one which has turned our world upside down. Lighting this Star, I believe, is like lighting a Star of Hope for 2021. Just as the shepherds and Wise Men followed the Star to the birth of Jesus, so too does this light symbolise the Way Forward in opening that door once again for our young people to the possibility of Jesus in their lives.

Quite often we hear that young people do not believe in God, do not want God, do not need God. I say they do not believe or want God *because* they do not know Him, but they *do* need Him. With God in their lives, they have hope, they have peace, they have love and they have joy. I encourage all of you in key positions throughout the Diocese to support this document, one that I have no doubt will continue to evolve in ensuring that each of our young people in the Diocese of Ferns are provided with *the way forward* towards God.

+ Denis Brennan

Table of Contents

What does the plan involve?	4
Diocesan Faith Representatives	4
What is a Diocesan Faith Representative?	4
Who can be a Diocesan Faith Representative?	4
Recruitment of a Diocesan Faith Representative?	5
Training, Resourcing and Supporting Diocesan Faith Representatives.	5
Developing <u>NEW</u> faith-based initiatives / projects / events, linking schools, parishes, and home	6
John Paul II Awards	7
School Library Project	7
Exam Prayer Project	7
Prayer Room Projects	8
Mary’s Meals Diocesan Charity	8
Develop Liturgical Resources	8
Our Lady’s Island School Retreats	9
Diocesan Camino	9
Diocesan School Based Retreat Team	9
Spiritual Retreats & Resources for RE Teachers/Principals, etc.	9
Youth & Clergy Pilgrimages to Medjugorje	10
How will all this happen?	11
Stage 1: Consultation	11
Stage 2: Recruitment	12
Stage 3: Resource Development	12
Stage 4: Review and Evaluation	13
Conclusion	14
Closing Remarks	14
Prayer for The Way Forward	14

What does the plan involve?

The plan involves three approaches as follows:

- Building a framework of parish based voluntary ***Diocesan Faith Representatives*** throughout the Diocese.
- Developing new faith-based initiatives/projects/events, linking schools, parishes, and home.
- Ongoing consultation with stakeholders to substantiate its content and steer the Way Forward.

Diocesan Faith Representatives

What is a Diocesan Faith Representative?

A Diocesan Faith Representative is a parish-based volunteer whose role is to support clergy, secondary school teachers and parents in enabling young people to form a relationship with God. The role of the Diocesan Faith Representative is as follows:

- The Diocesan Faith Representative will act as a link between Parish, School and Home, under the guidance of the Diocese.
- The role will be anchored primarily by the John Paul II Award.
- The Diocesan Faith Representative will enable and support key Diocesan Projects and Liturgical Events.
- They will circulate information regarding Youth Events / Pilgrimages, etc.
- They will attend relevant Diocesan Conferences and faith formation opportunities.
- And they will be part of the ongoing development of youth ministry within the Diocese.

Who can be a Diocesan Faith Representative?

- A practicing Catholic, supported by the local Parish Priest/Curate.
- Someone who relates to young people, adheres to Diocesan policy and procedures, and supports the Way Forward.
- Ideally someone with experience in supporting their parish community.
- All faith Representatives must be over the age of 18.
- Responsible and Reliable Person.
- Safeguarding & References will be required for this position.

Examples of Diocesan Faith Reps would be retired persons, homemakers, students, etc. Person available to support projects during the working day and is available to be contacted.

Recruitment of Diocesan Faith Representative

A strategic plan will be put in place to recruit over 100 Diocesan Faith Representatives and will involve the following:

- Supportive letter sent by the Bishop to all members of Clergy encouraging them to appoint Diocesan Faith Representatives.
- Recommendations will be sought from active Church members and existing diocesan appointments.
- Sourced from Diocesan pastoral, liturgical courses.
- Online media campaign and PR strategy will involve:
 - Launch of the Way Forward
 - Press Releases
 - Publicising the commissioning of DFP's as they occur.
- Adverts in Parish Newsletters, Parish Facebook pages and Parish Websites.
- Script for Clergy to read out at Mass seeking volunteers to come forward.
- Attendance by the Director of Religious Education and Youth Ministry at Masses to promote recruitment.
- Brochure on the Role of the Diocesan Faith Representative to be developed for those who are interested.

Training, Resourcing & Supporting Diocesan Faith Representatives

It is envisaged that the Diocesan Faith Representative will become part of the Diocesan Team. They will be an integral part of the faith formation of our young people. The Director of Religious Education & Youth Ministry will be the primary support to Diocesan Faith Representatives via the following:

1. Training
Relevant training for the position as well as safeguarding training will be provided by the Diocese before commencement. Ongoing training opportunities in support of the position will be sourced and provided as required.
2. Resourcing
All resources required will be provided by both the parish and the Diocesan Office for Religious Education and Youth Ministry.
3. Support
The Diocesan Faith Rep will be supported as follows:
 - Ongoing phone and email support
 - Annual Faith based retreat
 - Annual conference with relevant speakers
 - Annual/Bi-annual Newsletters
 - One to one visit.
 - Website support.

The local Parish Priest / Curate will be secondary support to the Diocesan Faith Representative and will involve them in relevant parish committees e.g., Pastoral.

Developing ***NEW*** faith-based initiatives / projects / events, linking schools and parishes.

It is important to recognize the existing youth projects which are operating successfully within the Diocese of Ferns as follows:

- Annual Lourdes Pilgrimage
- World Youth Day
- Spirit Youth Group
- John Paul II Awards

Recognition for the enormous work carried out by each committee and chair must be acknowledged. They have provided the benchmark for the Way Forward and we aim to build on the success of these groups in providing more faith formation opportunities for our young people.

The key areas that we are setting as the Way Forward for the next 3 years are as follows:

1. John Paul II Awards
2. School Library Project
3. Exam Prayer Project
4. Prayer Room Projects
5. Mary's Meals – Diocesan Charity
6. Develop Liturgical Resources
7. Our Lady's Island School Retreats
8. Diocesan Camino
9. Diocesan School Based Retreat Team
10. Spiritual Retreats & Resources for RE Teachers/Principals, etc.
11. Youth & Clergy Pilgrimages to Medjugorje

The plans for each of the above are outlined on the next few pages.

1. John Paul II Awards

The JPII Awards were introduced into the Diocese in 2017. Since then, 5 schools and 1 youth group have incorporated them into their school. The Awards process is a positive tool in enabling our young people to engage with their parish and community. The Awards process will be further developed to encourage other schools to take part as follows:

- **Annual Leadership Course:** This course will be provided to all participants together and will enable them to run various projects in their schools and parishes throughout the year.
- **Badges:** Each participant will wear a JPII Badge on their uniform. They will be provided with these in their JPII Packs which they will receive at their Annual Leadership Course.
- **Annual Pilgrimage to Knock**
- **Liturgical Calendar of Activities:** A liturgical calendar of activities will be developed, and these will all be discussed as part of the Annual Leadership Course to enable the participants to run initiatives within their school and parish.
- **Creative development of Parish Initiatives:** Participants will be encouraged to develop their own initiatives on an ongoing basis.

2. School Library Project

This project is a lovely resourceful way of linking schools and parish communities. Newsletters and other media outlets will be used to call on the community to donate books that they have at home that they believe would enable a young person to develop their faith. Examples of these books would be:

- Books about Saints, Padre Pio The Irish Connection,
- Inspiring reality stories – Sr Clare Crockett
- Stories about charities i.e., Mary's Meals
- Stories about faith journeys – testimonials
- Prayer reflection books

3. Exam Prayer Project

A professional Exam Prayer Pack would be developed for each school. The pack would contain:

- Card for each participating student to write their first name on.
- A bookmark for each student with a Prayer for Exams on one side and the words 'Someone is Praying for you Today' on the other.
- Rosary Beads and prayer cards
- Script for Teacher & Priest

4. Prayer Room Projects

Development of Prayer Room Projects that would maintain and enhance existing prayer rooms and promote new ones. E.g.

- JPII Participants led prayer time.
- Weekly Reflection Prayers
- Sharing Prayer Space – promoting a sharing of information between schools.
- God Box available in each Prayer Room which is delivered to Priest by JPII/Faith Rep periodically.
- Silent space
- Liturgical calendar of prayer room initiatives developed.
- Prayer Space initiatives i.e., interactive prayer spaces.

5. Mary's Meals

Mary's Meals has been chosen as a Diocesan Charity by Bishop Denis Brennan. The Charity feeds over 1.3 million children a day at a cost of €18.30 per child per year. Mary's Meals run school-based initiatives that encourage young people to engage in helping others. These initiatives could be coordinated by JPII Papal Cross participants to be built into the Diocesan Liturgical Calendar as follows:

- Annual Fast - Lent
- School Programme – January- February
- Backpack Initiative - October

6. Develop Liturgical Resources

The Diocesan Liturgy Group will support the Way Forward by developing key liturgical resources for parishes, schools, and home. These resources will support Catholics live and hand on their faith. To achieve this, the Diocesan Liturgy Group will source, develop, adapt, and create Diocesan Resources as follows.

- Liturgical resources for Young People: Opportunities to bring alive the Word of God in an accessible way to our young.
- Liturgical resources for the Religion Teacher. Development of resources that are classroom ready.
- Liturgical opportunities for our John Paul II Participants i.e., key celebrations and events during the liturgical year.
- Liturgical resources for home. Resources that will support the parent at home in handing on the faith to their children.

It is envisaged that this group would hold training or information sessions in enabling these resources to be utilized whilst also linking in with other Diocesan initiatives that are in support of this role i.e., Hook of Faith.

7. Our Lady's Island School Retreats

Our Lady's Island is a wonderful setting for school retreats. Each school was asked in 2019 whether they would use this base if it were made available to them and almost all schools said they would. (It should be noted that the reason for those who would not use it as their base, stated lack of funds to travel outside of school as the reason.)

A schedule will be planned to invite schools to book their Retreat within our Lady's Island for their TY's and Senior Cycle students. It is envisaged that this can happen in two ways:

- Diocesan led Retreat Team
- Retreat Facilitators contracted to run Retreats each year within various themes e.g., Soul Purpose, I Am, Pilgrim Path, etc.

Our Lady's Island will provide ample common room, environment, and food café for students in a cost-effective way. It will be expected that all schools will choose a date to be maintained from here on in on an annual basis.

8. Diocesan Camino

A Diocesan Camino has been developed within the Diocese of Ferns by Fr Jim Doyle. A Camino Committee to be established to package the Camino for Schools. The Camino Committee will be made up of clergy, teachers, and lay persons.

9. Diocesan School Based Retreat Team

A Retreat Team, clergy led, will be set up to accompany our young people through school from 1st year to 6th year. Each year the Retreat Team will visit schools with a different theme for each age group. A Retreat team will be made up of clergy and lay facilitators.

10. Spiritual Retreats & Resources for RE Teachers & Principals

Support of the Religion Teacher in the classroom is essential. The ongoing provision of liturgical and faith formation ideas and classroom ready resources is how we can enable our young people form that necessary relationship with God.

As with all faith leaders, it is also necessary to find areas in which to enrich and support the spiritual wellbeing of our teachers by providing them with faith-based retreat opportunities.

The Dioceses of Ferns and Kildare & Loughlin will work together in the provision of In-service and faith-based opportunities for our teachers and principals to meet these needs. Retreat opportunities will be developed in 2021 for 2022.

11. Youth & Clergy Pilgrimages to Medjugorje

A Clergy and Youth Pilgrimage to take place on an annual basis to Medjugorje. All clergy will be registered for the Clergy Retreat which occurs there each year. All young people will follow the adapted schedule mapped out by St. James Church in Medjugorje along with the Joe Walsh Tours Representatives. It is hoped that a pilot group will travel in 2021 to set out the course for future diocesan pilgrimages.

A committee to be set up to devise pilgrimage with a clergy chaplain.

How will all this happen?

The schedule for the Way Forward has been laid out in three stages:

- STAGE 1 Consultation: Commenced in October 2020.
- STAGE 2 Recruitment: Commences in January 2021.
- STAGE 3 Resources: Commences in January 2021.

The following is a breakdown of the Stages and schedule involved:

STAGE 1: Consultation

Stage 1 is the consultative process which involves the following process:

1. Focus Group Meetings
2. Strategic Planning Committee
3. Completion & Launch of the Way Forward

1. Focus Group Meetings

As part of the consultative process, four Focus Groups were set up in October 2020 representing the stakeholders as follows:

- Clergy Focus Group
- Lay Parishioner Focus Group
- Youth Focus Group
- Religion Teacher Focus Group

Focus groups were Diocesan wide and representative of many roles, i.e., priest, parent, teacher, young person, students, etc. All groups were presented with an online Way Forward PowerPoint Presentation after which they were asked to consider the content and ask questions or make suggestions. Very few questions or suggestions were asked or given, and all focus groups voiced their support of the project in its entirety.

Other groups were presented with the Way Forward in addition to the focus groups as follows:

- Diocesan Safeguarding Committee – verbally presented without slides.
- Diocesan Pastoral Committee – Online PowerPoint presentation.
- Clergy Chaplains – Online PowerPoint presentation.
- All Clergy – Online PowerPoint presentation to take place.

2. Strategic Planning Committee

All members of the Focus Groups were invited to be members of the Strategic Planning Committee. The primary role of the Committee is to support and enable the Way Forward

over the next 3 years. This will involve meeting once a month from September to May. It is also envisaged that members of the SPC will sit on one of the Committees in support of 3-year plan. The SPC is made up of the following members:

Clergy	Lay Parishioners	RE Teachers
Fr Jim Finn	Terry McNamee	Joe Bridges
Fr Billy Caulfield	Michael Dwyer	Leeann Cummins
Fr James Cullen	John Fortune	Annemarie Doyle
Fr Jim Doyle	Melanie Devereaux	Shannon White
Fr Roger O'Neill	Lorcan Brennan	Catherine Millinick

The youth voice will be represented by the John Paul II Participants. The first meeting of the SPC took place on Thursday the 26th of November 2020.

3. Completion and Launch of the Way Forward Plan

- The outcome of the Focus Group Meetings and the Way Forward Plan will be presented to the SPC at the meeting at the end of November 2020.
- The SPC will ratify the plan and present it to the Bishop for his approval.
- The Launch of the Plan will be prepared and circulated locally and nationally in December 2020.

STAGE 2: Recruitment

Stage 2 is the recruitment of 100 Diocesan Faith Representatives as detailed at the beginning of this plan. The recruitment will commence in January 2021 with a target date of completion being December 2021.

The SPC will support the recruitment and it is anticipated that all DFP's will be trained during 2021 to commence the role on completion of their training.

Training will include the following and will take place over 2 days.

- Safeguarding Training
- Leadership & Facilitation Skills
- John Paul II Awards
- Faith Formation

STAGE 3: Resource Development

Stage 3 will commence also in January 2021 and will develop the various resources as identified in this plan. The completion date of all resources is for the new academic year of 2022. A breakdown of this schedule by resources will be part of the remit of the Strategic Planning Committee. The following committees will be set up to support the development of the resources:

1. Liturgical Committee: Led by Fr Jim Doyle
2. Schools Retreat Team: Led by Fr Jim Finn
3. Our Lady's Island Retreat Committee: Led by Lorcan Brennan
4. John Paul II Committee: To be allocated.
5. Camino Committee: Led by Fr Jim Doyle
6. Schools Project Committee: To be allocated.
7. Pilgrimage to Medjugorje: Led by Clergy Chaplain James Cullen
8. Support to RE Teachers: Led by Colette O'Doherty & Hilda Campbell as Diocesan Advisors.

The Director of Religious Education & Youth Ministry will sit on all Committees and will feedback to the Bishop in relation to same.

STAGE 4: Review & Evaluation

There **is** a Stage 4 which will commence at the beginning of next 3-year phase in 2024. This stage will include the following:

- Catechism Course/Faith Programmes.
- Supporting Faith in the Home.
- Faith for students attending schools with no religious studies or faith formation opportunities.
- A Pilgrim Way – Enniscorthy, Gorey, New Ross, Wexford town walk.
- Pilgrimage to Derry – Clare Crockett: Person of Commitment
- Evaluation & preparation of the next 3-year plan.

It is envisaged that after 3 years; the Director of Religious Education will have built up a strong relationship with the Diocesan Faith Representatives. This relationship will provide the platform for further development of support tools for parish and home. The Diocesan Faith Representatives will be part of the evolving process of the faith formation growth for the Diocese of Ferns along with all the other stakeholders who were part of this initial process.

Concluding remarks

Although the aim of this document and the Way Forward is to forge links between schools, parishes, and homes, it is underpinned by the following overall goal:

*To enable our young people
to form a relationship with God*

This goal must be the foundation of every activity, every project and every idea that relates to youth ministry. It must be the first question asked and the last statement of approval. It must be the foundation from which all ideas and resources grow. No action, finance or decision may dilute this statement.

We ask God for His continued guidance and direction as we do His Will.

Prayer for The Way Forward

God our Father,

Creator of the Universe,
You prepared Jesus your Son,
through the power of the Holy Spirit
for His ministry here on Earth.
Pour out today Your Spirit
Upon the young people of our Diocese of Ferns,
As they prepare for their future.

Empower them to know You,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Open their minds to the Loving Relationship
Which You offer to them, now, while on Earth,
And the everlasting place they will celebrate
With You and all the Saints in eternity.

Through Your grace and their generosity
Empower them to bear a harvest of goodness
In our families, Parishes, Schools, and communities,
For the Spiritual growth of Irish Society.

We make this prayer through Jesus Your Son,
Our Lady of Knock, St Patrick, St Aidan
And all the Saints of Ireland.
Amen.