

# The Cardinal's Directive

In order to:

- respond to the critical situation with the availability of priests
- make wise and prudent use of our buildings,
- ensure that parishes are supported in making and implementing decisions for the future,

I am directing all parishes to begin (or to actively progress) a review of their churches and presbyteries, with this review to be completed and proposals developed by 30 October 2019. This is not optional; I am requiring that it be done.

The rights of parishes are to be respected, but stewardship, the preferential option for the poor, and the common good (which includes the pool of priests and lay pastoral leaders shared by all parishes), and collaboration with neighbouring parishes, should guide the review, together with the Synod outcomes.

## *Stewardship*

As a faith community we need to take a stewardship approach to the gifts of God, including the resources of the parish, and our individual contributions to those resources. Stewardship requires us to make efficient and effective use of our resources.

As a fundamental principle, each generation should aim to pay its way in the parish and put aside adequate reserves through its giving, without relying on investments (e.g. in rental property) by previous generations or selling assets to meet operating costs.

Sharing our resources, individually and collectively, as an expression of gratitude to God is an essential part of good stewardship.

## *Preferential option for the poor - "A poor church for the poor"*

If a parish is to have income available for charitable and mission purposes, it must make efficient use of its buildings. Maintenance and insurance costs are high, and it is hard to justify ownership of churches which are used for a few hours a week when there is another church close by. If we are to develop our support for the poor and the marginalised, we may have to make sacrifices.

## *The common good*

All parishes share the pool of available priests and lay pastoral leaders. The most likely scenarios in the near future, even for large parishes, are either one active priest, one active priest and a lay pastoral leader, or a lay pastoral leader with one or two retired priests in sacramental ministry. This means that most parishes will have lesser ministry hours by priests. Parishes being served by religious order priests should not assume this will continue, as religious orders make their own decisions about their priorities for mission.

Parishes need to be prepared to be radical in their thinking and discernment and prepared for the

reactions that change inevitably brings. Letting go of the established order is necessary if we are to be well-prepared for the future and willing to free resources for mission, rather than simply maintaining what we have and what we do. This is not about a reduction in pastoral care in our parishes, but about doing things differently, providing pastoral care in new ways as well as becoming "missionary disciples".

## THE REVIEW PROCESS

In city parishes adjoining parishes should collaborate on their reviews. Parishes with only one church and presbytery are to carry out the review in order to assess their own situation and to enable them to work with adjoining parishes.

I ask you to use the following review process as the basis for your discernment:

1. The review is to include:
  - demographic trends and projected changes in the area covered by the parish e.g. densification, sub-division, loss of people. (For North Island parishes - go to this [website with population forecasts](#) then select NZ<sup>1</sup>. The interactive map can be used to find predicted population growth from 2019-2043 in parishes in the lower North Island. Local body websites and other sources will need to be used by South Island parishes.)
  - current and predicted Mass counts.
  - capacity of existing churches in the parish (including possibilities for extending capacity in each church);
  - parish school roll numbers and trends.
  - a realistic assessment of what ministry can be provided by a reduced number of priests, and by available lay pastoral leaders. Parishes should not assume they will have their present complement of clergy.
  - earthquake strengthening issues for parish property.
  - consultation with neighbouring parishes.
2. Parishes are to identify
  - the amount needed annually to sustain a prudent 10-year maintenance plan and insurance costs for parish property;
  - operating costs for the parish for one year, including realistic annual maintenance and insurance costs;
  - what is needed from parishioners to ensure the parish does not run at an annual loss.
3. The review is to identify:
  - how many churches the parish needs to cater for its Mass count (taking into account the availability of priests), and the ideal location of the church or churches. For virtually all parishes with more than one church this will mean reducing the number of churches in the parish.
  - what provision needs to be made for accommodation of priests, what form it should take and where it is best located.
  - what steps the parish needs to take in relation to its churches and priest accommodation.
4. Once the review is complete parishes should revisit their pastoral plan to determine whether there are changes needed as a result of the review. As part of this the parish should identify the skills and resources which can be called upon for mission, and the financial giving needed to sustain the life of the parish.

5. The review is to result in proposals regarding the parish's churches and presbyteries, to be sent to the Archbishop's Office by 30 October 2019. If a parish wishes to act on a property matter prior to 30 October 2019, the completed review must accompany the documentation provided to the Board of Administration.

If we don't take some action to work together in addressing the issues arising from the reduced availability of priests, earthquake resilience, too many churches for our Mass count, amalgamation, and the Synod outcomes, then as an Archdiocese we face a future which will be impossible for our priests and lay pastoral leaders to sustain, and which for lay people will be dominated by fundraising for years to come. Our future should be about worship, formation, and ministry, with a new emphasis on mission. To this end we need to give serious, even radical, consideration to how we can best use our assets.

Throughout this process please ask parishioners to pray that we will all be open to the Holy Spirit in our discernment, and that we will respect and care for one another as we work to create a future full of hope.

John A Cardinal Dew  
Archbishop of Wellington