

Excerpts from an address by Bishop Dermot Farrell at a conference with laity and priests in the Diocese of Ossory, Ireland, on 24 November 2018

Pope Francis is constantly putting his synodal vision of the Church before us. The question he is asking, and that we should ask ourselves, is what kind of Church is God calling the priests and all Catholics to be in the longer term – perhaps less self-referential and more a community of missionary disciples, less clerical and more synodical, to use the language and categories of Pope Francis.

The mission of the Church, the work of God, is not just the work of a group of professionals, it is the call and the responsibility of all the baptised. There is little sense of mission within the Catholic Church (in Ireland), and there is no sense of what that mission should be. We need to recover the missionary mandate of Jesus Christ.

Crisis demands creativity. This time of reduced numbers may well afford us an opportunity to be creative and to reimagine the institutional Church. We have not been abandoned by God; God's will is to be found in this situation. Let us not look back to our own experience of the Church of our youth but look ahead to the Church in which we will minister and worship in the years ahead.

Prayers adapted from the Missal

Merciful Father, grant that all the faithful of the Church, looking into the signs of the times by the light of faith, may constantly devote themselves to the service of the Gospel.

Keep us attentive to the needs of all that, sharing their grief and pain, their joy and hope, we may faithfully bring them the good news of salvation and go forward with them along the way of your Kingdom.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Father of mercy and love, we ask you to open our eyes to the needs of our brothers and sisters; inspire in us words and actions to comfort those who labour and are burdened.

Make us serve them truly, after the example of Christ and at his command. And may your Church stand as a living witness to truth and freedom, to peace and justice, that all people may be raised up to a new hope.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

