



Dromore Diocesan Pastoral Council Newsletter

Issue 3: Lent 2026

www.dromorediocese.org/diocesan-pastoral-council



Archbishop Eamon Martin (Centre) with Father Anthony Moffett (left of centre), with the assembled clergy of the diocese and two young altar servers at St Colman's Church, Dromore. Photo: Mark Byrne.

Ordination of Father Anthony Moffett

Father Anthony Moffett was ordained to the priesthood, by Archbishop Eamon Martin on Sunday 11th January 2026, the Feast of The Baptism of the Lord, at Saint Colman's Church, in Anthony's home town of Dromore.

It was an especially happy occasion because Fr Anthony is the first priest to be ordained for the Diocese of Dromore since the ordination of Fr Brian Fitzpatrick and Fr Colum Murphy in 2014.

The choice of venue carries significant historical resonance. A monastery was founded at Dromore between 497 and 513 AD, surviving at least until the second half of the twelfth century. The Diocese of Dromore emerged in a recognisable form in the late twelfth century. Following the Protestant Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century, Catholicism was suppressed, forcing Catholics to worship in secret. By the mid-eighteenth century, the enforcement

of restrictions had eased enough to allow the underground church to begin to tentatively re-emerge publicly. Newry was chosen, over the town of Dromore, as the new episcopal seat due to its large Catholic population, with St Mary's 'Old Chapel' initially serving as the cathedral. In the early nineteenth century, a new cathedral for Dromore Diocese was built in Newry, the first in Ireland to be dedicated after Catholic Emancipation (1829).

A large congregation, many clergymen and seminarians braved stormy weather and driving rain to be present. Fr Feidhlimidh Magennis (PP, St Colman's Parish, Dromore) had been preparing for some time to ensure that the church provided a warm welcome for the visitors. Fr Brian Fitzpatrick (PP, Moyraverty & Seagoe, and Diocesan Vocations Director) ably served as Master of Ceremonies.

Continuing coverage and photo gallery overleaf.

Inside

Young Adult Event at Dromantine

Find out what happened when young adults came together to share their hopes and ideas for the future of the church.

Feature: From the Deacon's Desk

Read about the good works of our permanent deacons.

Catholic Schools Week

Find out about celebrations to mark Catholic Schools Week 2026 which took place from 18th - 24th January.

John Paul II Award Presentation

Enjoy our photo gallery of the presentation of certificates and the commissioning of new volunteers for Newry Parish.

Mass of Thanksgiving at St Patrick's Church Aghacommon

Read about Archbishop Eamon's visit to Seagoe parish to celebrate the completion of the refurbishment of Aghacommon's historic church.

Synodality Spotlight

See inside for news from the Universal Synod study groups and an update on the Irish National Synodal Assembly.

Call for Nationwide Prayers for World Peace on St Patrick's Day

The Irish bishops have called for [nationwide prayers](#) for world peace on St Patrick's Day, mindful of conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Mass from St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, with Archbishop Eamon Martin presiding, will be broadcast live on RTÉ television and radio at 11.00am on Saint Patrick's Day.



Archbishop Eamon Martin anoints the hands of Rev. Anthony Moffett. Photo: Mark Byrne.

During his homily Archbishop Eamon said:

"Anthony, today you are beginning your public ministry as a priest, and you are given the same missionary mandate that Christ gave to his disciples: 'Go, make disciples'. Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In a few moments, as part of the ordination ceremony, you will be anointed with the sacred oil of chrism, just as you were first anointed with chrism on the day of your baptism. The sacrament of baptism incorporates all believers into Christ's unique priesthood and it enables all the faithful to live as priest, prophet, and king."

Father Anthony was born in Belfast, but lived in Dromore for most of his life. He found his studies at St Anne's Primary School and Rathmore Grammar School, both in Dunmurray, to be rewarding. After leaving school, Anthony graduated from business college in Belfast and took up a position in the family business of Moffett & Son's Ltd (one of Ireland's largest furniture manufacturers and suppliers) remaining there for some seventeen years.

Fr Anthony's vocation began to grow when he took a career break to serve as a missionary. What was meant to be a year became several, spanning three continents, nine countries, and sixteen locations. After a period of discernment with the 'Explore Away' programme, he entered the seminary at Maynooth in 2018.



Top: Rev Anthony Moffett kneels before Archbishop Eamon Martin. Bottom: (R-L) Rev Anthony Moffett (laying prostrate), Mark McDonnell (Seminarier, Maynooth), Fr Brian Fitzpatrick (PP Moyravery & Seagoe, Master of Ceremonies), Archbishop Eamon Martin, Deacon Seán Farrell (Tullylish). Photos: Mark Byrne.



Clockwise from above: Members of Father Anthony's family at the ordination, the altar party for the first Mass, Fr Anthony with his parents, Fr Anthony cutting his ordination cake. All photos: Mark Byrne.

Speaking about his vocation, Fr Anthony said:

"Raised in a close and supportive family where faith was quietly lived rather than loudly spoken, my vocation has been shaped by perseverance, prayer, and trust in God's timing. My advice to those discerning a vocation: Bring it to prayer and trust that God is gentle and faithful in the way He leads."

Fr Anthony presided over his First Mass at Newry Cathedral on the morning after his ordination, Monday 12th January 2026, concelebrating with with Canon Francis Brown (Administrator, Newry Parish), Fr Alphonsus Chukwunyenye MSP, and assisted by Rev Tiernan Burke, (from Whitechurch, Cork) Diocese of Cloyne.

Please pray for Fr Anthony as he begins his priestly ministry.

Dromore Seminarians

Dromore currently has two men studying for the priesthood at Maynooth - Philip McParland (Newry) and Mark McDonnell (Saval). Please keep them in your prayers.



Dromore Vocations

If you feel that you may have a vocation to the priesthood then please contact Fr Brian Fitzpatrick.
Tel: 028 3834 1901
Email: pp.moyraverty.seagoe@gmail.com

If you feel that you may have a vocation to the Permanent Diaconate, then please contact Rev Kevin Divine. Tel: 02838323161 Email: office@stpetersparishlurgan.org



Welcome to the third edition of the
Dromore Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) Newsletter.

As we gathered for our recent meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, we were deeply encouraged by the vibrant life and spiritual energy flourishing across our Diocese. Taking time to explore parish websites, bulletins, and social media channels offered a wonderful reminder of the faith-filled creativity present in every corner of our community. Today, each of our 22 parishes has an online presence—whether through a parish website, Facebook page, or YouTube channel—providing a window into parish life and ministry. All parish links can be accessed here: <https://www.dromorediocese.org/parishes/>

This Lent, our parishes have opened their doors and hearts in countless meaningful ways. From the quiet stillness of *Lectio Divina* and the reflective journey of the Stations of the Cross, to uplifting Bible study groups and joyful family fundraising events, every initiative has reflected our shared desire to grow in faith, hope, and love. It has been inspiring to witness such a rich tapestry of prayer, service, and fellowship, with each parish offering its own unique contribution to the spiritual life of our Diocese.

What has stood out most is the spirit of connection—how each parish, in its own distinct way, strengthens the bonds that unite us as one faith community. These expressions of devotion and service not only enrich local parish life but also deepen our shared journey as disciples.

As part of our ongoing work on the Synodal Pathway, I hope you have had the opportunity to engage with the Baptised and Sent resources. They contain a wealth of material to support reflection and discussion during Lent: <https://www.dromorediocese.org/2026/01/21/resources-baptised-and-sent-in-lent/>

As we continue through this sacred season and look forward to the joy of Easter, let us remain committed to supporting one another and celebrating the many ways Christ's presence is made visible in our ministries, our families, and our shared mission.

May the Risen Lord bless you and your families abundantly this Easter, filling your homes and hearts with peace, hope, and renewed joy.

Mrs Patricia Maguire

Diocesan Pastoral Council Chairperson



The Vatican has published the final reports of three of the study groups established by Pope Francis in 2024: [The Mission in the Digital Environment](#), [Revising the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis \(Fundamental Norms for Priestly Formation\)*](#) in a missionary synodal perspective, and [Women's participation in the life and leadership of the Church](#). (Click links for reports.)

In their [Statement of the Spring 2026 General Meeting of the Irish Bishops' Conference](#), the bishops reaffirmed their commitment to fostering a church rooted in communion, participation and mission.

The [Irish National Synodal Assembly](#) will take place on Saturday, 17th October 2026, at the City North Hotel, Co Meath. This gathering will be an important moment in the Irish Synodal Pathway.



Dromore Pastoral Council Members 2025/26

Most Reverend Eamon Martin,
Archbishop of Armagh and
Apostolic Administrator of
Dromore

Rev Pearse Thornbury

Ms Paula Jordan

Ms Elizabeth Murray

Mrs Frances McNally

Fr Anthony Moffett

Fr Thierry Marteaux

Mrs Patricia Maguire (Chair)

Mrs Lynn Laverty

Mr Stephen Greene

Fr Brian Fitzpatrick

Dr Mark Byrne

International Women's Day 2026

On International Women's Day, Sunday 8th March 2026, all parishes across the Diocese were invited to join together in prayer to acknowledge the immense contribution of women to the life and mission of our Church and to society.

Archbishop Eamon wrote in a letter sent to all parishes:

"International Women's Day is an opportunity to honour; recognise and pray for the women whose gifts enrich our parishes and communities. In a special way we give thanks for those who serve in ministry, leadership, music, safeguarding, administration, finances, volunteering, and the many unseen roles that support parish life every week."

Parishes were encouraged to mark the day by using a specially prepared liturgy provided by the diocese; by offering a blessing for women at the end of Mass; by providing refreshments afterwards; or by creating a display honouring women.



John Paul II Award Presentation

Archbishop Eamon Martin celebrated Mass at 12 noon in Newry Cathedral on 4th January 2026 to mark the closing of the Jubilee Year.

During the Mass, Archbishop Eamon presented JP II Award medals and certificates to young people from the diocese who had successfully completed the programme.

The Pope John Paul II Award is designed to help young people get involved in their local parishes for their own benefit and the benefit of their parish communities.

Within the Diocese of Dromore, the Youth Commission works in homes, schools, parishes and youth clubs, delivering a variety of programmes designed to meet the changing needs of young people.

Are you interested in participating in the Pope John Paul II Award programme or learning about other youth programmes?

Contact the Youth Director, Mrs. Frances McNally.

Tel: 028 3083 3898. Email: youthdirector@dromorediocese.org

Commissioning of volunteers

Archbishop Eamon also commissioned, at the same Mass, new altar servers, readers and members of the junior choir for Newry Cathedral, many of whom had been recruited by Fr Emmanuel Fasakin MSP, a Missionary of St. Paul, Nigeria, who was appointed to Newry Parish in September 2025.



Clockwise from top: Archbishop Eamon Martin with some of the recipients of the John Paul II Award, Archbishop Eamon commissions new Ministers of The Word, Fr Emmanuel Fasakin speaks to new altar servers for Newry Cathedral. Photos: Mark Byrne.



Catholic Schools Week 2026

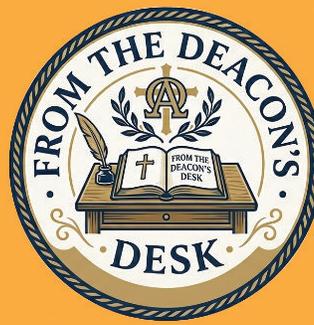
Catholic Schools Week 2026 took place from 18th - 24th January. The event invited us to pause, reflect, and celebrate the quiet yet extraordinary way holiness takes root in our ordinary lives. This year's theme was "Catholic Schools – Normal Lives, Called to Holiness".

Praying together as a diocesan family

To celebrate Catholic Schools Week, Archbishop Eamon presided over a prayer service entitled 'Sing Praise' at Newry Cathedral on Wednesday 21st January at 10.30am. Canon Francis Brown was the concelebrant. Schools from across the Diocese of Dromore attended as a visible sign of unity, faith, and shared mission.

Clockwise from top Students from St. Joseph's High School Newry, St. Mary's High School Newry, St Joseph's Convent Primary School Newry, St. Ronan's Primary School Newry (green uniform) & St Clare's Abbey Primary School Newry (blue uniform) together, who participated in the prayer service for Catholic Schools Week at Newry Cathedral. Photos: Courtesy of respective schools (All via Facebook).





The Work of Permanent Deacons

By Rev Daniel McAnulty

On 28 September 2025, the Diocese of Dromore celebrated the ordination, by Archbishop Eamon Martin, of five permanent deacons in Newry Cathedral: Rev Patrick Gallagher (Moyraverty Parish), Rev Seán Farrell (Tullylish Parish), Rev Pearse Thornbury (Lurgan Parish), myself, Rev Daniel McAnulty (Newry Parish), for Dromore, along with Rev Brendan McKernan (Parish of Derrynoose, Keady and Madden) for the Archdiocese of Armagh.

While many core aspects of the deacon's ministry are the same (for example, assisting at Mass, proclaiming the Gospel, celebrating baptisms), each deacon lives out his ministry differently. Many deacons are married with families, and many have a day job; this determines what they can do.

One role that Deacons often take is funeral ministry. They will sometimes look after every aspect of funerals apart from the Mass. Some deacons may also celebrate funeral services for people who do not request a requiem Mass.

Some deacons make home visits to bring Holy Communion to the housebound. Others may run faith development programmes such as those happening during Lent.

It also should be noted that this is brief outline of what deacons are doing in the diocese but there are those who are doing great work that goes unnoticed.

Rev Patrick, Rev Mr Brendan, and I came together to create a website, a Facebook page and (hopefully soon) a podcast as a way to reach out to people and highlight different aspects of the faith.

Deacons for Christ Website

Through the [Deacons for Christ website](#), we aim to provide resources, encouragement, and inspiration for everyone seeking to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith. Join us as we embark on this transformative adventure and discover ways to make a positive impact in the world around us.

Deacons for Christ on Facebook

A regular feature on the [Deacons for Christ Facebook Page](#), 'Catechism Corner', shares bite-sized excerpts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Please consider clicking the link and giving us a follow.

Interested in the Permanent Diaconate?

Learn more about the Permanent Diaconate in Dromore here: <https://www.dromorediocese.org/permanent-diaconate/>

If you feel that you may have a vocation to the Permanent Diaconate, and you would like to discuss it with someone, then please contact Rev. Kevin Divine. Tel: 02838323161 Email: office@stpetersparishlurgan.org

Green Shoots: Rising Religious Affiliation Amongst The Irish

A new report, [Turning the Tide? Recent religious trends on the island of Ireland](#) shows signs of a strong uptick in religious affiliation in Ireland, especially among young people aged 16-29.

Celebrating Saint Brigid's Day

Volunteers created beautiful displays at St Brigid's Church in the Rooney's Meadow area of Newry and at St. Colman's Church, Shinn (Saval Parish) to celebrate the feast day of the co-patron of Ireland on February 1st.

Above: Elsie Mc Keown (St Mary's High School, Newry) as Saint Brigid, posing before the display at St. Brigid's Church, Newry. Photo: Courtesy Siobhan Burns. Below: Display at St. Colman's Church, Shinn. Photo: Saval Parish on Facebook.



Mass of Thanksgiving at St Patrick's Church, Aghacommon

Article by Fr Brian Fitzpatrick PP, Moyraverty & Seagoe

Clockwise from below: Archbishop Eamon and Fr Brian at the altar of St Patrick, Archbishop Eamon blesses the congregation, Archbishop Eamon stands before the sanctuary. Photos: Brenda and Malachy McKernan.

A Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated on Sunday 22nd February 2026 for the completion of the refurbishment of Saint Patrick's Church, Aghacommon, in Seagoe parish.

St Patrick's Church, Aghacommon - known affectionately as 'Derrymacash Chapel' - is a Grade B+ listed building of special architectural or historic interest. It was built between 1829 and 1832 to replace an earlier small Mass house on the site. Notable features include a high altar, dating from 1925, from the studio of Antonio Caniparoli in Carrara, Italy (donated by Mr Patrick MacGreavy); the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary (donated by Mrs Casey and family); and the altar of St Patrick (the gift of several subscribers, whose names are preserved on a list inside the tabernacle).

Work was necessary due to major problems with damp in the walls. Internally, the walls were stripped back to the stonework in 2023, while re-pointing took place outside, to halt water ingress and allow the walls to dry throughout 2024.

We were able to resume use of the church while the drying out took place, before closing again for phase 2 in the second half of 2025 to allow re-plastering and other health and safety and upgrade works in the church to take place.

After three years of work, we warmly welcomed Archbishop Eamon among us on Sunday 22nd February, 2026 to share in our delight and gratitude for the work that has been done through the generous contributions of parishioners over the years, and grant aid from [National Churches Trust](#) and [The Wolfson Foundation](#).

We give thanks too for the skill and professionalism of all the architects, artisans, builders and tradesmen and women, many from among our own parishioners, or from the wider locality, some with personal connections to St Patrick's church and cemetery.

We have much for which to thank God, and pray that honour and glory will be given to Him from within the walls of this sacred building in safety and comfort for decades to come.



Youth Commission Young Adult Event at Dromantine

Analysis by Mark Byrne

More than sixty people attended a gathering for young adults at Dromantine Retreat and Conference centre, near Newry, on the evening of Thursday, March 5th, 2026.

The event, organised through the Youth Commission, by and for young adults, provided an opportunity for young people to have a say in the future planning for the diocese. Attendees participated in a [Conversations in the Spirit](#) discussion activity. Nine key themes emerged from the discussions:

1. Belonging & Community

There was a strong expression of a need for connection, to bond with others, to be part of a group. Suggestions included providing community time after Mass; holding more informal community events and encouraging young adults to invite a friend to these. There was also a call for intergenerational events to encourage connection and unity.

2. Faith Expression through Activities

Young adults value youth-led groups such as '[St Ronan's Youth for Christ](#)' (Moyraverty, Seagoe, Magheralin & Lurgan), where faith and friendship grow through meet-ups, pizza nights, and online connection through a WhatsApp group. Young adults also appreciate activities beyond traditional parish settings, including religious hikes, camping in Dromantine, pilgrimages to Knock, and walking a Camino. They also encouraged putting faith in action through activities that provide service to others, including helping the homeless.

3. Music and Worship Style

Music plays a central role in the faith experience of many young adults, particularly through choir participation. They also expressed an appreciation for simpler, informal moments of prayer and music that offer opportunities to connect with faith in a relaxed and authentic setting.

4. Accessibility During Stressful Times

Exam time was highlighted as a particularly stressful period for young people. Suggestions included having dedicated quiet prayer spaces, prayer cards, and relaxed environments where students can pause and reflect.

5. Faith Dialogue and Evangelisation

Participants highlighted the importance of breaking down barriers and getting to know priests personally. Some also spoke about a fear of judgment when discussing faith openly. They suggested a gentle approach to sharing faith, supported by personal testimonies about how God has made a difference in people's lives, and simple ways of helping others recognise God's presence in their everyday lives.

6. Practical Engagement and Innovation

Young adults recognised the potential of social media as a powerful tool for connection and evangelisation and as an accessible source for answers to their questions. They also



emphasised the importance of innovative approaches to teaching the faith, making learning about God engaging and relevant.

7. Sacred Spaces

Participants spoke about the importance of the aesthetic experience of faith, finding a strong sense of spiritual resonance in traditional churches, vestments, and sacred spaces. In contrast, more modern spaces were sometimes perceived as having less impact.

8. Inclusion & Leadership

There was an emphasis on the importance of being empowered to lead, organise events, and take initiative within parish life. Young adults expressed a desire for meaningful roles and ministries. There was a clear call for every pastoral area to have an active youth group.

9. Funding & Sustainability

Participants also highlighted the financial challenges faced by many youth groups, which are often self-funded and rely heavily on local fundraising. They expressed a need for greater financial support and diocesan backing to help sustain and grow youth initiatives.

Youth Perspective

By Bernadette McNulty

Inspired by the Holy Spirit we gathered together, trusting that God has a plan. Together we began to discover it and unpack it — and we must keep unpacking it.

Success is the one word that I would use to describe our event in Dromantine on March 5th. We came together to discuss how, as a diocese, we can develop and strengthen the faith of our young people.

We were joined by inspiring individuals, including Archbishop Eamon Martin. We heard from inspirational speakers and were led in music by our young people. Their presence and energy shaped the atmosphere and reminded us why this work really matters.

The conversations were honest, encouraging and hopeful and there was a clear sense that everyone has a role to play.

This gathering was not the end point — it was the beginning. God has a plan, and our task now is to keep listening, keep working together, and keep unpacking what that plan looks like for the young people of our Diocese.

We now look ahead with hope. We plan to gather again, welcoming even more young people, continuing the conversation, and building stronger communities of faith together in our parishes, pastoral areas and Diocese.

Bernadette McNulty, from Mayobridge, is currently on placement with the Dromore Diocesan Youth Commission from St Mary's University College, Belfast.



All Photos: Mark Byrne