

# Diocese of Cork and Ross

## Prayer, Listening and Discerning 2024–2025

This report is a thematic summary of the responses provided by parishioners and clergy at three gatherings in the Family of Parishes which includes Carraig na bhFear, Glanmire, Glounthaune and Watergrasshill.

This family of parishes kindly agreed to pilot the sessions in the autumn of 2024 and the other gatherings were held in the Spring of 2025 in response to Bishop Fintan's Pastoral Message of September 2024. The Bishop called for prayer, listening and discernment centred on three topics:-

- A. How can we make baptism the gateway into life in our faith community?
- B. How can priests, deacons and parishioners prepare for and celebrate the Sunday Eucharist so that we are nourished and strengthened to tell others about Christ?
- C. Session 3 was a review of the families of parishes and posed seven questions for consideration.

*Themes under each topic are given in order in which they are highlighted in the responses.*

## A. On Baptism:-

### 1. Preparation and Catechesis for Parents

All four parishes stress that **parents must better understand the meaning and commitment of baptism.**

- **Glounthaune:** Emphasizes a shift from fear-based theology (“removal of sin”) to relational and community-based meaning.
- **Watergrasshill:** Suggests baptism instructors, informal conversation over tea, and gentle faith education.
- **Glanmire:** Clear structure for before-and-after support, including lists, roles, and what to expect.
- **Carraig na bhFear:** Calls for baptism ministries made up of parents, better environments for meetings, and refreshers for new parents and godparents.

 *Insight:* Education must be **relational, respectful, and adapted to modern realities** — not just instructional.


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### 2. Welcome, Hospitality, and Comfort

Creating a **non-judgmental, family-friendly environment** is a central theme.

- **All four groups** mention:
  - Quiet rooms for babies
  - Space for movement and noise at Mass
  - A cultural shift from silence and rules to **joy, welcome, and presence**

- **Carraig na bhFear** and **Watergrasshill**: Emphasize making the church space physically and emotionally welcoming.
- **Glanmire**: Calls for warm communication, positive body language (“smile, don’t scowl”).


 *Insight*: Families must feel **fully accepted, not merely tolerated**, especially when their children are young and unpredictable.

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### 3. Follow-Up and Ongoing Engagement After Baptism

Every group stresses the need to **stay in contact with families** after the baptism day.

- **Glounthaune**: Encourages special follow-up Masses and involving siblings.
- **Watergrasshill**: Proposes blessing children at Mass, and emails or teams to keep track of families.
- **Glanmire**: Suggests annual events (e.g. Feast of the Baptism), follow-up invitations, and community-building.
- **Carraig na bhFear**: Ideas include reminder Masses, godparent engagement, and yearly gatherings.

 *Insight*: **Post-baptism contact is essential** to making the sacrament a gateway, not a goodbye.

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### 4. Integration into Parish Life

There’s strong support for including children and families in **ongoing parish activities**:

- **All groups** suggest:
  - Children’s liturgies and choirs
  - Visible roles for children and parents in Mass
  - Events like faith formation balls, family days, grandparents’ events
- **Watergrasshill** proposes “Faith Games” and puzzle activities online
- **Carraig na bhFear** includes devotional and creative ideas like the **Children's Rosary, Saint storytime, and All Saints Party**

 *Insight*: Integration must go **beyond Sunday Mass** — into liturgy, service, fun, and faith formation.

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## 5. Community and Belonging

The importance of **connection and relationship** is consistently affirmed.

- **Glounthaune**: Reframes baptism as entry into a global “family” that’s kind and supportive.
- **Watergrasshill**: Emphasizes social and spiritual support for families — moral framework, sense of purpose, “regrouping” weekly at Mass.
- **Glanmire**: Suggests building **informal parent networks** and meaningful hospitality.
- **Carraig na bhFear**: Promotes peer-to-peer ministry, community-based catechesis, and **involvement of experienced parents**.

 **Insight: Social belonging enhances spiritual growth** — building friendships helps build faith.

## Summary Table

Theme	Glounthaune	Watergrasshill	Glanmire	Carraig na bhFear
<b>Parent Preparation &amp; Education</b>	✓ Reframed theology	✓ Gentle, structured	✓ Practical guidance	✓ Peer-led formation
<b>Welcome &amp; Hospitality</b>	✓ Focus on tone & attitude	✓ Family-friendly spaces	✓ Quiet rooms, smiling	✓ Warm venues, inclusivity
<b>Post-Baptism Engagement</b>	✓ Family Masses & siblings	✓ Blessings, emails	✓ Feast-based events	✓ Annual return Masses
<b>Child/Family Participation</b>	✓ Mass inclusion	✓ Online & offline activities	✓ Liturgy, music	✓ Devotions & creative ideas
<b>Belonging &amp; Community</b>	✓ Church as global family	✓ Supportive parish life	✓ Parent networks	✓ Peer-parent mentoring

## Distinctive Strengths by Parish

Parish	Distinctive Insight
<b>Glounthaune</b>	Reframes baptism positively (community over sin) and connects to global faith family
<b>Watergrasshill</b>	Blends digital ideas (Faith Games) with real-life rituals; emphasizes gentle re-entry for parents
<b>Glanmire</b>	Most detailed before-and-after plan, practical & social supports
<b>Carraig na bhFear</b>	Broadest approach: theology, parental catechesis, devotional practices, creative celebration

## B. On the Eucharist

### 1. Preparation for Mass

All parishes agree that both priests and parishioners benefit from **spiritual and practical preparation**:

- **Watergrasshill and Carraig na bhFear**: Emphasize *reading Scripture in advance*, arriving on time, and allowing quiet time before Mass to focus hearts and minds.
- **Glanmire**: Strongly affirms the value of *homily preparation*, noting it should challenge, inspire, and offer a message to take into the week.
- **Glounthaune**: Advocates preparing readings with relevance, giving people “a takeaway” for daily life.
- **Carraig na bhFear**: Suggests **Lectio Divina** groups and reflective comments during Mass to prepare for future Sundays.

 **Insight**: Mass preparation must be **intentional, thoughtful, and directed toward personal transformation**.

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### 2. Active Participation and Inclusion

All four parishes stress that the Sunday Eucharist becomes nourishing when people are **actively involved**:

- **Glounthaune and Watergrasshill**: Suggest involving young people in roles (Prayers of the Faithful, offertory, choir, greeting).
- **Glanmire**: Highlights inclusion across all ages – from music to welcoming to altar service.
- **Carraig na bhFear**: Encourages *age-appropriate liturgy*, Sunday school, and involvement of those preparing for sacraments.


 **Insight**: **Participation leads to ownership**, and ownership strengthens personal and communal faith.

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### 3. Creating a Welcoming and Joyful Atmosphere

Each parish recognizes that the **tone of the space and people matters deeply**:

- **Glanmire and Watergrasshill**: Recommend greeters, decorated spaces, and seasonal atmosphere to make church warm and beautiful.
- **Glounthaune**: Calls for Mass to be a social connector, especially for families.
- **Carraig na bhFear**: Notes the importance of being present and welcoming to each other, especially after Mass.


 *Insight:* A **spirit of welcome and warmth** builds the kind of Church people want to return to and invite others into.

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## 4. Message and Meaning in the Liturgy

Clear emphasis on ensuring the **Gospel message is heard, understood, and applied:**

- **All four parishes** advocate that the **homily should offer a concrete takeaway** – a Gospel message or challenge for the week.
- **Watergrasshill:** Suggests setting a weekly focus (e.g., forgiveness, service).
- **Glanmire:** Notes homilies should be meaningful, not showy, and reflect God's love.
- **Carraig na bhFear:** Suggests the priest's prayerfulness and commitment is central to nourishing others.

 *Insight:* The **quality and relevance of the homily** directly affects the spiritual impact of the Eucharist.

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## 5. Music and Atmosphere

- **All four parishes** affirm the **power of music:**
  - **Glanmire** and **Watergrasshill** call for uplifting, inclusive hymns.
  - **Glounthaune** notes music as a form of shared prayer and participation.

 *Insight:* Music **unites, lifts, and reinforces** the Eucharistic celebration.

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## 6. Living the Eucharist Beyond the Mass

Mass must lead to **daily Christian living:**

- **Glounthaune:** Encourages simple acts of kindness as a reflection of Christ.
- **Watergrasshill:** Proposes “weekly Gospel homework” – living out the message.
- **Glanmire:** Suggests a “message to ponder and put into action.”
- **Carraig na bhFear:** Stresses *works of charity* and *being present to each other*.

 *Insight:* The Eucharist must be **more than a ritual — it's a launchpad for mission**.

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## Comparative Summary Table

Theme	Glounthaune	Watergrasshill	Glanmire	Carraig na bhFear
<b>Preparation before Mass</b>	✓ Relevant readings, takeaway	✓ Quiet time, Gospel focus	✓ Homily prep, welcome	✓ Lectio Divina, homily focus
<b>Participation in Liturgy</b>	✓ Youth roles encouraged	✓ Lay and youth roles	✓ Full age inclusion	✓ Sunday school, sacramental roles
<b>Welcoming Atmosphere</b>	✓ Social contact encouraged	✓ Warm décor, greeters	✓ Decorated, inclusive	✓ Being present post-Mass
<b>Clear Homily Message</b>	✓ “Little message” for life	✓ Weekly focus, Gospel lens	✓ Gospel-based, humble	✓ Gospel challenge, clarity
<b>Music and Symbolism</b>	✓ Music important	✓ Seasonal music & symbols	✓ Choirs, known hymns	✦ Less emphasized
<b>Eucharist as Daily Life</b>	✓ Kindness, prayer groups	✓ Weekly actions suggested	✓ Gospel into community	✓ Charity, reflection, presence

✓ = Strong emphasis | ✦ = Mentioned or implied

## Key Points

### Common Themes Across All Four

- The Mass must be **personal, participatory, and practical**.
- Everyone—young and old—has a role in both preparing and celebrating.
- **Homilies matter**: they’re the bridge between the liturgy and life.
- The goal is not just to attend Mass, but to **be changed by it** and go out as witnesses.

### Distinctive Contributions

- **Watergrasshill**: Offers highly creative ideas (weekly Gospel focus, symbolic visuals, takeaway sheets).
- **Glanmire**: Emphasizes hospitality, homily preparation, and spiritual formation for all ages.
- **Glounthaune**: Focuses on kindness, social inclusion, and relevance of readings.
- **Carraig na bhFear**: Highlights the Eucharist as a source of mission, charity, and transformation.

## C. On the Families of Parishes

### 1. How has the Family of Parishes supported parish life in your parish?

#### Common Themes:

- **Shared priestly cover** has been the most valued benefit, ensuring continuity of Mass and sacramental life across parishes.
- **Cooperation among clergy** and **joint initiatives** (e.g. training, reconciliation services) are seen positively.
- However, **visibility and communication of the Family structure to laypeople** remains low in some parishes.

#### Parish Comparisons:

- **Glounthane** emphasized **cooperation and unity among priests and assemblies**.
  - **Glanmire** appreciated priest support at key times but noted limited lay-level visibility and interaction.
  - **Watergrasshill/Glenville** felt very supported, with priest coverage, ministry training, and shared liturgical events.
  - **Carraig na bhFear** valued a growing sense of communion and being part of something larger, especially during priest absences.
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### 2. How is your parish supporting the Family of Parishes?

#### Common Themes:

- **Attending shared meetings, hosting events, and sharing priests** are the main contributions.
- There is a sense of **growing goodwill and mutual support**, though engagement levels vary.

#### Parish Comparisons:

- **Glounthane** highlighted a spirit of good will and cooperation, mainly via assemblies.
  - **Glanmire** contributes space and priestly support but seeks deeper interaction.
  - **Watergrasshill/Glenville** is highly engaged—supporting the website, training, and assemblies.
  - **Carraig na bhFear** contributes through priestly cooperation and shared understanding.
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### 3. What have been the challenges for your parish?

#### Common Themes:

- **Loss of a consistent priestly presence** and **difficulty reaching consensus** were frequently noted.
- **Adjustment to shared identity** and **reduced autonomy** were also challenges.

#### Parish Comparisons:

- **Glounthane** struggled with reaching consensus and limited engagement beyond structured events.
  - **Glanmire** expressed concerns about lack of clarity early on and limited lay involvement.
  - **Watergrasshill/Glenville** overcame initial fear of change and now focus on coordination and Mass timing.
  - **Carraig na bhFear** had to let go of viewing itself as isolated and adjust to shared leadership.
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### 4. How can we celebrate sacramental life as a Family of Parishes?

#### Common Themes:

- Call for **joint liturgies, missions, novenas, and rotational sacramental events**.
- Need for **creative scheduling** and **shared prayer experiences**.

#### Parish Comparisons:

- **Glounthane** proposed joint liturgies, newsletters, and shared devotions.
  - **Glanmire** encouraged sacramental coordination and supportive services (e.g. bereavement workshops).
  - **Watergrasshill/Glenville** emphasized reconciliation events and expanded communal worship.
  - **Carraig na bhFear** imagined symbolic shared locations (grottoes, river) and sacramental moments tied to place.
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### 5. How do we encourage younger people to participate in the faith community?

#### Common Themes:

- All parishes recognize the **difficulty** of this challenge.
- Suggested approaches include **youth choirs, altar servers, youth-focused Masses, and school/parish cooperation**.



**Parish Comparisons:**

- **Glounthane** emphasized family modeling, youth participation in liturgy, and listening to youth voices.
  - **Glanmire** stressed music, rituals, and social media outreach.
  - **Watergrasshill/Glenville** has strong school and sacramental links, with youth involved in Mass.
  - **Carraig na bhFear** proposed creative youth ministries, Sunday schools, and a Junior Parish Assembly.
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**6. How can ministries be further supported?****Common Themes:**

- **Training, communication, and shared ministry meetings** are essential.
- Ministries need **recognition, peer support, and inter-parish collaboration.**

**Parish Comparisons:**

- **Glounthane** pointed to communication and the need for training and gratitude.
  - **Glanmire** suggested shared courses and social gatherings to foster belonging.
  - **Watergrasshill/Glenville** has implemented training, ministry rotations, and joint formation events.
  - **Carraig na bhFear** called for more voice for ministers and regular exchanges of ideas and challenges.
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**7. What do you hope our Family of Parishes will look like in 5–10 years?****Common Themes:**

- **Increased lay leadership, youth involvement, and more unified identity.**
- Recognition that **priest numbers will fall, so laity must step up.**

**Parish Comparisons:**

- **Glounthane** hopes for full cooperation, empowerment, and a welcoming culture.
  - **Glanmire** wants inclusive, lay-led parishes with strong communication and uplifting liturgy.
  - **Watergrasshill/Glenville** hopes for vibrant communities, coordinated leadership, and a dedicated Family Secretariat.
  - **Carraig na bhFear** envisions full lay participation, integrated spiritual life in schools and sports, and reciprocal support across generations.
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**Conclusion:**

These four parishes demonstrate **shared optimism** and **pragmatic collaboration** as they navigate the Family of Parishes model. While **support for clergy, rotational liturgy,** and **ministry training** are strong points, ongoing attention is needed in **youth engagement, shared identity,** and **lay empowerment**. Most hope for a future where the Family of Parishes is **more than logistical cooperation**—a spiritually united, welcoming, and mission-driven community.