

# 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 Douglas & Rochestown, Frankfield/Grange and Turner's Cross.

These 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. Parent Preparation and Catechesis

All three parishes emphasize that **baptism must be explained clearly and meaningfully** to parents.

- **Douglas & Rochestown:** Highlight the importance of explaining the gift of baptism in both written and conversational ways — grace, new life, belonging.
- **Frankfield & Grange:** Recommend spiritual mentors, printed guides, and personal contact to help parents reflect on baptism as a lifelong journey.
- **Turner's Cross:** Call for catechesis tailored to modern adults, using baptism as a doorway to ongoing formation (like Alpha, or during Mass).


 *Insight:* Baptism preparation must help parents move from **cultural expectation to spiritual commitment**.

---

### 2. Welcome and Belonging

Creating a **non-judgmental, joyful welcome** is a top priority.

- **Douglas & Rochestown:** Stress the need for warmth, friendliness, and visibility (e.g., mentions in leaflets and during Mass).
- **Frankfield & Grange:** Suggest welcome posters, family-friendly space, and peer-based contact.
- **Turner's Cross:** Emphasize welcoming families in church, especially those who may not be regular attendees.


 *Insight:* A truly welcoming atmosphere reduces anxiety and makes families feel **valued, not tolerated**.

---

### 3. Ongoing Contact After Baptism

All three parishes recognize that **follow-up is key** to making baptism a real gateway.

- **Douglas & Rochestown:** Suggest annual family gatherings, regular emails, and contact up to school age.
- **Frankfield & Grange:** Propose milestone-based contact (birthdays, sacraments) and seasonal invitations.
- **Turner's Cross:** Recommends creating a rhythm of seasonal gatherings and touchpoints.


 *Insight:* Sustained contact affirms that **baptism is a beginning**, not the end.

---

### 4. Involving Children and Families in Parish Life

Each group sees value in **connecting families with the liturgy and community life**.

- **Douglas & Rochestown:** Link baptism to school, marriage, and other sacramental preparation.
- **Frankfield & Grange:** Advocate for children's Masses, liturgical roles, and creative inclusion.
- **Turner's Cross:** Suggest involving children and godparents in social events and parish celebrations.

 *Insight:* Families must be **invited into ongoing participation**, not left on the fringe.

---

### 5. Godparents and Extended Family

There is clear emphasis on **strengthening the role of godparents**.

- All three suggest involving godparents in preparation sessions.
- **Turner's Cross** adds the importance of grandparents and family legacy in faith transmission.


 *Insight:* Godparents should be **faith partners**, not just ceremonial witnesses.

---

## 6. Communication and Visibility

Visibility and clarity are essential for engagement.

- **Douglas & Rochestown:** Emphasize online communication and Mass mentions.
- **Frankfield & Grange:** Highlight need for signage, information points, and digital outreach.
- **Turner's Cross:** Suggest bulletin invitations and clearer access to baptism resources.

 *Insight:* Clear communication is critical to ensure **no one misses the invitation** to deeper connection.

## Summary

Theme	Douglas & Rochestown	Frankfield & Grange	Turner's Cross
Parent Preparation	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong
Hospitality & Welcome	✓ Emphasized	✓ Emphasized	✓ Emphasized
Ongoing Engagement	✓ Regular contact	✓ Seasonal touchpoints	✓ Gatherings
Family Involvement	◆ Implied	✓ Active roles	✓ Liturgical/social
Godparent Role	✓ Affirmed	✓ Affirmed	✓ Extended family
Communication & Visibility	✓ Digital + liturgical	✓ Posters/digital	✓ Bulletins & invites

✓ = Clearly emphasized | ◆ = Mentioned or implied

## B. On the Eucharist

### 1. Welcome and Inclusion

- **All three parishes** emphasize the importance of creating a **welcoming atmosphere**. This includes:
  - Greeters at the door.
  - Ministers or parishioners acknowledging individuals by name.
  - Being friendly and open, especially toward young people and newcomers.
  - Creating a community feel through social events (e.g. cuppas after Mass).

### 2. Lay Participation and Ministry Involvement

- Strong call across parishes for **greater lay involvement**:
  - Participation in readings, prayers of the faithful, choirs, and offertory.
  - Suggestion from **Douglas & Rochestown** for lay people to write Prayers of the Faithful and even deliver homilies monthly.
  - Encouragement for **young people** to take on roles to foster a sense of ownership and connection to the Mass.

### 3. Youth Engagement

- All parishes note a concern around youth disengagement and suggest:
  - Children's choirs and Masses.
  - Youth-led services or ministries (especially at **Turner's Cross**).
  - Programs like Alpha Youth or John Paul II Awards (Douglas & Rochestown).

### 4. Preparation for Mass

- Emphasis on **spiritual and scriptural preparation**:
  - Reading scripture in advance (Lectio Divina).
  - Confession as a way to spiritually prepare.
  - Time for silence and reflection before and after Mass (Turner's Cross).

### 5. Relevant, Short, and Impactful Homilies

- All three parishes ask for:
  - Short, clear, relatable homilies.
  - Homilies should tie readings to everyday life and inspire.
  - Suggested use of modern communication styles (Facebook, leaflets).

### 6. Music and Liturgy

- Strong agreement on the importance of **music**:
  - Choirs, particularly involving children and youth.
  - Music that is participatory and appropriate to the season/liturgy.
  - Use of hymns to help people engage emotionally and spiritually.

## 7. Living the Faith Beyond the Mass

- Many responses link Sunday Eucharist to **Christian living**:
  - Practicing charity and kindness.
  - Living good example and acting out the Gospel in daily life.
  - Support for parish social initiatives.

## Parish Comparisons

Feature	Douglas & Rochestown	Frankfield & Grange	Turner's Cross
<b>Welcome &amp; Hospitality</b>	Strong emphasis on personal welcome, named recognition	Community love and kindness highlighted	Meet & greet at door, welcome leaflets suggested
<b>Lay Involvement</b>	Broad inclusion, including lay-written prayers, suggested lay homilies	Encourages acts of kindness and reverence	Participation through music, readings, Alpha groups
<b>Youth Engagement</b>	Children's choir, prayers of the faithful	Younger members encouraged in prayers	Ask youth to design prayers of faithful, Sunday school
<b>Homily Focus</b>	Short, relevant, non-patronising	Highlight Gospel message through lifestyle	Use sermon leaflets, practical examples
<b>Music in Mass</b>	Essential – choir, hymns, atmosphere	Enhancing celebration through singing	Instrumental music, youth involvement
<b>Mass Preparation</b>	Spiritual (Lectio Divina, reflection), physical environment (heat, decor)	Confession, inner reflection	Silence, scripture study, welcoming atmosphere
<b>Faith in Action</b>	Call for Christian witness in life, inclusion	Promote good deeds, living out the Eucharist	Example-driven faith expression, ongoing support

## Summary Insights

- The Eucharist is seen not as an isolated act but as **the heart of parish life**, where **welcome, preparation, music, homily, and participation** converge to make it a spiritually nourishing event.
- **Youth engagement and lay empowerment** remain priority concerns, with consistent proposals for practical involvement.

**Relational and spiritual preparation**—prayer, confession, and community care—are regarded as essential steps to deepen Eucharistic understanding and effectiveness.

## C. On the Families of Parishes

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

Parishes have experienced **modest but growing support** from the Family of Parishes. **Douglas & Rochestown** and **Turner's Cross** highlighted shared programmes like **Alpha, training**, and **pastoral cooperation**. These initiatives foster collaboration and mutual learning. **Frankfield & Grange** acknowledged some assistance but felt **little visible impact**, except through Alpha-related interactions. There's a **desire for deeper connection**, but also a **sense that support remains mostly at the priestly or leadership level**.

---

### 2. How is your parish supporting the Family of Parishes?

Support is most often seen in the form of **shared events, training, and clergy cover**. **Douglas & Rochestown** appear to be the most proactive, hosting diocesan meetings and launching initiatives like Alpha and Lexio Divina. **Frankfield & Grange** and **Turner's Cross** participate in meetings and support each other's ministries when needed, though several comments suggest **lay collaboration is limited and still emerging**. Clergy are described as the main connectors between parishes at this stage.

---

### 3. What have been the challenges since becoming part of the Family of Parishes?

Several recurring issues include:

- **Lack of communication and interaction** across parish assemblies, especially noted by **Frankfield & Grange** and **Douglas & Rochestown**.
  - **Geographic separation** between parishes, such as between **Turner's Cross** and **Frankfield**, complicates collaboration.
  - **Fear of dilution of parish identity**, particularly for **Douglas & Rochestown**.
  - **Volunteering fatigue and limited lay engagement**, affecting **Frankfield & Grange** in particular.
  - A broader **uncertainty about purpose and direction**, with some questioning the logic behind the Family structures.
- 

### 4. How can we celebrate sacramental life together?

There was broad agreement on the potential for **joint sacramental celebrations and training**:

- **Douglas & Rochestown** suggested shared liturgical events (e.g. baptism Masses, seasonal gatherings) and rotating Mass locations.

- **Frankfield & Grange** favoured **joint celebrations of First Communion, Confirmation, and bereavement Masses.**
  - **Turner's Cross** emphasized the need for **adult catechesis and richer theological formation.**
  - There's also a call for **rotating clergy** and **symbolic liturgies** that bring all parishes together.
- 

## 5. How do we encourage younger people to participate?

This question drew wide-ranging responses, reflecting **urgency and concern**:

- **Douglas & Rochestown** were most proactive, offering **Youth Alpha, choirs, and faith initiatives in schools.**
  - **Turner's Cross** noted the **wider societal disengagement**, suggesting that **real-life concerns** like climate anxiety or mental health could be **linked with faith** to regain relevance.
  - **Frankfield & Grange** admitted to **little impact so far** and encouraged the development of **youth-specific ministries.**
  - All agreed that **schools are essential points of engagement**, but **parental disinterest** and **peer pressure** are major hurdles.
- 

## 6. How can ministries be further supported?

There is a strong consensus that ministries need **better structure, visibility, and training**:

- **Douglas & Rochestown** proposed **annual retreats, social gatherings, and training** via public platforms and social media.
  - **Turner's Cross** emphasized **ongoing catechesis, reflective practice, and educational events.**
  - **Frankfield & Grange** recommended **more volunteer recruitment, inter-ministry gatherings, and annual appreciation events.**
  - There's a shared view that a more **cohesive ministry network** could energise lay participation.
- 

## 7. Hopes for the Future of the Family of Parishes

There is cautious optimism mixed with realism about the challenges ahead:

- **Douglas & Rochestown** envision a **vibrant, lay-led model** with **diverse engagement** including **non-nationals, younger people, and community partnerships.**
- **Frankfield & Grange** hope for **greater unity, collaboration, and resource sharing** across parishes.

- **Turner's Cross** foresees a **future with fewer priests**, necessitating **well-formed lay leaders** to lead sacraments and community life.
- 

## Overall Summary

The Family of Parishes initiative is still developing in these parishes. Communication gaps, inconsistent lay engagement, and unclear structures are common challenges. However, there is growing cooperation, particularly in areas like Alpha, liturgical support, and training. To thrive, the Family of Parishes must prioritize stronger communication, youth inclusion, and a decentralized yet unified identity that respects the individuality of each parish while fostering shared mission.