

Diocese of Cork and Ross

Prayer, Listening and Discerning 2024–2025

This report is a thematic summary of the responses provided by members of vowed religious communities.

The engagement with them was held in the Spring of 2025 in response to Bishop Fintan's Pastoral Message of September 2024. The religious communities were asked to respond to two topics:-

- A. How can Religious, as baptised Christians faithful to their charism, help people live their baptismal calling in our Parishes and Family of Parishes?
- B. How can Religious, by virtue of their commitment, presence, and witness, play a part in making our Diocese a more inclusive Church and more relevant to people's lives?

A. Baptismal calling

Several **recurring themes** emerged from the responses:

- **Witness through daily life:** Almost every community emphasized the power of lived witness over words, showing baptismal calling through kindness, prayer, and fidelity to one's charism.
- **Support for families and faith formation:** Many advocated supporting parents, godparents, and parishioners through preparation, formation groups, and accessible conversations about faith.
- **Hospitality and inclusion:** Openness to others, especially the poor, the elderly, immigrants, and the marginalized, was a strong expression of baptismal living.
- **Charism as mission:** Each community showed how its **charism** (e.g. service, education, compassion, preaching) can uniquely contribute to helping others live their baptismal call.
- **Collaboration with the parish and diocese:** Suggestions included supporting parish ministries, faith-based events, sacramental preparation, and shared prayer gatherings.

Thematic Summary

1. Living Witness and Christian Example

Many communities believe the most effective way Religious can support baptismal identity is through **daily witness** to Gospel values:

- *Presentation communities* spoke of joy, kindness, hope, and integrity in living faith publicly.
- *Religious Sisters of Charity* emphasized love, kindness, and prayerful presence as expressions of charism.

- *Redemptorists* and *Daughters of Charity* promoted a prophetic presence, particularly through preaching, hospitality, and welcoming the marginalized.

2. Support for Faith Formation

Religious can offer **catechesis and faith development** through:

- Baptism preparation classes and post-baptism family support.
- Spiritual formation (e.g., *Lectio Divina*, Alpha, small groups).
- Encouragement of RCIA for older children (as noted by the Presentation Ballyphehane community).
- The *Redemptorists* emphasized the need for **realistic catechesis** responsive to modern cultural contexts.

3. Charism-Driven Service

Each community shared how their unique **founder's charism** continues to serve the baptismal call of others:

- *Presentation Sisters* invoked Nano Nagle's heart for the poor and education.
- *Religious Sisters of Charity* focused on spiritual and material poverty.
- *Daughters of Charity* suggested facilitating open conversations on faith, welcoming diverse backgrounds.
- *Redemptorists* highlighted their preaching mission and retreat ministry.

4. Encouraging Community and Belonging

Several responses highlighted how Religious can promote **inclusive community life**:

- Through pastoral presence, prayerful hospitality, and one-on-one listening.
- Organizing social or spiritual gatherings (e.g., morning cuppas, prayer groups).
- Fostering a deeper understanding that *baptism is the foundation of all vocation*.

5. Engagement with the Marginalized

This was a strong theme for most communities:

- *Presentation Deerpark* emphasized presence among the marginalized.
- *South Presentation* and *Daughters of Charity* stressed connections with immigrants, the elderly, and the poor.
- *Redemptorists* proposed targeted outreach to those underserved by parish structures.

Comparative Summary Table

Community	Key Contributions	Unique Emphases
Presentation Ballyphehane	Faith education for parents, baptism preparation, community prayer	Liturgical celebration of Baptism, naming and blessing of children
North Presentation	Respect, listening, faith witness, environmental spirituality (Laudato Si)	Youth engagement via social/ecological action
South Presentation	Hospitality, care for the poor, prayer, parish support	Vincent de Paul links, immigrant outreach
Deerpark Presentation	Witness, prophetic presence, inclusion of marginalized, ongoing support	Role of Religious in modeling Christian life for parish
Daughters of Charity	Hospitality, conversation, formation groups, outreach to the “unchurched”	Inviting dialogue about faith and identity
Religious Sisters of Charity	Kindness, aging with dignity, service of the poor, hope, prayerful presence	Collaboration with elderly and joy through presence
Redemptorists	Mission, catechesis, prophetic preaching, facilities for events, spiritual retreats, outreach programs	Strong call for prophetic role and creative catechesis

Conclusion

The Religious communities bring a rich diversity of perspectives shaped by their **charisms**, but united in a desire to help others **live out their baptism** through:

- **Faithful presence**
- **Lived Gospel values**
- **Ongoing formation**
- **Welcoming the forgotten**
- **Collaborative ministry**

Together, they reflect the Church’s multifaceted richness and offer a **powerful spiritual and pastoral resource** for the Families of Parishes initiative.

B. How can Religious, by virtue of their commitment, presence, and witness, play a part in making our Diocese a more inclusive Church and more relevant to people's lives?

The following trends emerge:

1. **Welcoming and Hospitality:** A widely affirmed approach—building inclusion by simply *welcoming people as they are*, with no judgment or conditions.
2. **Listening and Respectful Presence:** Many communities stress the need for *attentive listening* and *quality presence* that values each person's journey.
3. **Faith Formation and Spiritual Support:** Some call for *new faith experiences* beyond formal schooling or sacraments—like *retreats, adult literacy, or prayer groups*.
4. **Social Inclusion and Outreach:** Engagement with *immigrants, prisoners, the poor, youth, and marginalized groups* featured in nearly every community's response.
5. **Collaboration with Laity and Clergy:** Several ask for religious to be more involved in *parish councils, diocesan planning, and formation for clergy and lay leaders*.
6. **Charism and Gospel Living:** Most believe *living their charism*—through compassion, humility, or prayer—is their clearest path to making the Church relevant.

Thematic Summary by Focus Area

1. Witness Through Presence

- All communities see **everyday Gospel witness**—through kindness, prayer, and humility—as foundational.
- The *Sisters of Charity, South Presentation, and Deerpark* communities emphasize joy, respect, and non-judgmental attitudes as welcoming signs of faith.
- *Religious Sisters of Charity* and *Redemptorists* mention presence among the elderly and poor as essential.

2. Hospitality and Inclusion

- *South Presentation, Daughters of Charity, and Deerpark Presentation* affirm the **power of hospitality**—welcoming immigrants, organizing tea mornings, or simply greeting newcomers warmly.
- The *Daughters of Charity* go further, suggesting a **chaplain for African communities** and **research** into those alienated from Church.

3. Reflective Engagement and Faith Formation

- *Ballyphehane* calls for better **formation for lay leaders and youth**—pointing out that participation won't grow without adequate training.
- *North Presentation* suggests that Religious can **lead meditation groups** to reach those outside formal religion.

- *Deerpark* and *Religious Sisters of Charity* emphasize **spiritual literacy**—teaching people to pray, offering adult literacy, and demystifying liturgy.

4. Engaging the Marginalized

- All communities identify groups at the **margins of Church life**—immigrants, refugees, Travellers, prisoners, lapsed Catholics.
- *Redemptorists* propose linking Cork parishes with *international missions* to broaden horizons and encourage global solidarity.

5. Role of Religious in Parish and Diocesan Life

- Several responses reflect concern that Religious are not fully integrated into the Family of Parishes structure.
- *Deerpark Presentation* and *Redemptorists* call for Religious to be **present at planning meetings**, not as a separate group but as integral participants.

Comparative Table of Emphases by Religious Community

Community	Presence & Witness	Hospitality & Welcome	Formation & Education	Outreach to Marginalized	Role in Church Structures
Presentation Ballyphehane	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	○ Limited	✓ Moderate
North Presentation	✓ Strong	✓ Moderate	✓ Moderate	○ Limited	○ Low
South Presentation	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	○ Moderate	✓ Moderate	○ Low
Deerpark Presentation	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong
Daughters of Charity	✓ Moderate	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong
Religious Sisters of Charity	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Moderate	○ Low
Redemptorists	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Strong	✓ Very Strong	✓ Strong

Conclusion

The Religious communities clearly believe that **faith lived with integrity, openness, and a servant's heart** is key to making the Diocese of Cork and Ross:

- **More inclusive** (welcoming people where they are),
- **More relevant** (responding to real human needs), and

- **More participative** (involving the baptized—clergy, laity, and Religious—in walking together).

Each community draws from its unique **charism and pastoral experience**, offering a distinct but unified vision for a **synodal, listening, welcoming Church**.