

**Pastoral Letter on the Diocesan Finances 26th Sunday of the Year
26th / 27th September 2026**



Peter

BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND FAVOUR OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE, BISHOP OF WREXHAM
TO
THE CLERGY AND THE CONSECRATED AND LAY FAITHFUL
OF THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM
Health and Blessing in the Lord.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I speak to you to-day about the Diocesan Finances, present and future as part of the consideration of *Into the Future* and the prospects for the Diocese. I am most grateful to those of you who have participated in the consultation process in your parishes which is being carried forward to the pastoral Vicariates (Deaneries) and will come to me. On laying out the situation of the Diocese I have asked that without great debate the questions about diocese, parish and yourselves as individuals are given short and honest responses. From those collated responses I will know your thoughts, answers suggestions about the future. Sometimes there will be agreement and sometimes not, it is for me to make the decisions having listened to you and guided by the Spirit and my own prayer as I believe you have been in yours. I am not asking for great narrative and strong debating points but short, concise responses to the questions posed. (refer to *Into the Future* page 26, the twelve Questions)

My starting point again is as we heard in to-day's Second Reading from S.Paul's letter to the Philippians, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (2:4) The document into the Future contains some hard data and I will return to that in a moment.

In physics there are a set of laws relating to the pressure, temperature and volume of a gas; take a balloon for example, if you heat it gently the volume and pressure will increase; similarly if you change the volume, that will change the pressure or the temperature, and so on in order that a constant 'k' is maintained. If we now take the Diocese and the weekly income and any other two of the following elements, number of priests, number of churches, Sunday Mass attendance, number of Masses; Mass times, -change one and the other two also change. A crude example perhaps, but the reality is that unless the weekly revenue income, that is the collections increase we cannot maintain the number of priests, churches or Masses. Similarly change any of those elements which are all inter-related and the weekly offertory will almost certainly decrease, and we are in a spiral of decline.

I have to be realistic about expectations. There are parishes and their constituent churches which because of the total population will never in the foreseeable future be financially viable, to close any of them would mean expecting the congregation to travel between twelve and twenty miles to the next nearest church. Elsewhere in the Diocese there are parishes and their constituent churches which are not viable but to close one of them would mean a journey of five to ten miles in two or three directions to the next church. We need to keep the best and most suitable churches and build new parishes, that is communities gathered from a greater area. The current Sunday Mass count and the submission of the parish financial statements for 2025-2026 will give a more accurate calculation of the giving per head of those who come to Sunday Mass. If parishes and the Diocese are to be sustainable there must be generous and realistic giving. I am most grateful to you for what you do give and some most generously, but there has got to be an overall increase in weekly giving just to keep paying the weekly costs of parishes. Paying for major repairs and even regular repairs, maintenance and improvements has also to be from the parishioners themselves, the Diocese does not have an endless pot of money that can be drawn on to pay these extra costs.

One of the most contentious expenses to the parishes is the annual Diocesan Levy. This is the parishes' contribution to the Central Services and Curial costs

of the Diocese, namely: safeguarding services; HR; property management; accountancy and financial; schools; evangelisation pastoral formation and support, the cost of having a bishop, to name some. The assessment on each parish equally is close to and capped at 40% of the parish offertory and gift aid income, the remainder is drawn from Diocesan investments. Last year there were eight parishes whose income (offertory and gift aid) did not meet the expense of having a priest and paying the Diocesan levy; a further seven had less than £5,000 surplus. That's a total of half of the parishes in the Diocese that are at serious financial risk.

As soon as the Diocesan accounts from all the parishes are collated and audited, they will be made available as too the bishop's account. These will be published in graphic form in CLARION and in full on the Charity Commission website. In three weeks' time there will be the annual Finance Evening for the clergy and one person from the parish finance committee (PFC) of each parish at which a more detailed explanation of the Diocesan finance will be given and the opportunity for questions submitted beforehand to be asked. Your priest and PFC will then be able to cascade that information down to you.

I am aware I have painted a picture you may find depressing, but it is the reality of where the Diocese is and by implication the measures that will have to be taken immediately and in the foreseeable longer term. The present numbers of churches, priests, Masses, Mass attendance and financial contributions cannot remain unchanged. Thankfully in the last year we have a better balance in the number of priests, but not without cost. Also the Mass attendance figures in 2025 show an increase, but sadly not a proportionate increase in weekly offering; this could be because the increased number is largely children who do not contribute financially. If as parishes and the Diocese we are to celebrate in seven years' time the two thousandth anniversary of the death and resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ the Church of Wrexham must be built on the foundation of rock, financially, spiritually and pastorally (cf. Matthew 7:24-27) and that starts now.

If there are any whom I have offended by this forthright statement of my assessment and that of my financial advisors of the state of the Diocese I offer

my humble apologies. This is how I see it and the course of actions that need to be taken following the current consultation across the Diocese in response to the basic questions, 'what is the mission to which we have been called?' and 'how are we to grow as evangelising communities?' with diminishing resources. There are of course many good things going on in the Diocese, many people who are generous with their time, skills and resources, I am not overlooking them and the contribution they make, for those we are all most grateful.

I invite and ask you to pray often the prayer for the Renewal of the Diocese. With every good wish and the assurance of my continued prayers for you all,

† Peter

Bishop of Wrexham

Given at Wrexham on the 23rd September in the Year of our Lord 2026 and appointed to be read in the Churches and Chapels of the Diocese of Wrexham at all Masses of the Twenty-sixth Sunday of Ordinary time, and available in print form and online thereafter.

Prayer for the Renewal of the Diocese

Loving Father, you sent your Son into the world
to open the gates of heaven
and to teach us to know, love and serve you.

We thank you for those who first proclaimed the Faith in this land,
and for those who have kept alive the flame of faith for generations.

As we look to the future, fill us with the Holy Spirit
that with joy and boldness we may live and proclaim the Gospel.

Give wisdom to our Bishop and priests as they lead us
and nourish us all with the Eucharist
that we may be witnesses of the resurrection;
we ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

St David, pray for us.

St Winefride, pray for us.

St Richard Gwyn, pray for us.

Ss Asaph and Tudno, pray for us.

Ss Beuno and Garmon, pray for us.

All you saints of Wales, pray for us.