

The scope of *Faith into Action*

As a starter for this conversation, here are some ideas. Let's start with the assets we already have.

Faith: God made us for love. Encountering Jesus in the Gospel, the Eucharist and prayer, we can let loose his love in the world. The transforming values of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching are perhaps our most precious gift to our neighbours and society at large.

People: In our parishes, chaplaincies, religious communities, schools and Catholic organisations there are literally thousands of people. They in turn connect with people in all walks of life, in secular bodies and other churches.

Commitment: The diocese is full of people already praying and working for a better world, serving those in need at home and abroad, working to change the systems and policies which create those needs, or giving money to enable others to do so. And there are many who are looking for opportunities make a difference.

Know-how: As the whole people of God in the diocese, we represent a wealth of goodwill, skills, expertise, experience and contacts. Just imagine what we can achieve if we act together!

So how might we release these riches? On page 3 below is a provisional remit for this programme we call *Faith into Action*. It's not a definitive list – we may not be able to do it all, and there are sure to be things we've missed. As the two-year consultation proceeds, the opportunities will become clearer and a focus will develop.

From all these activities we might expect to see the following outcomes.

Outreach: Tangible benefits for people in need, and for the communities in which we live

Renewal: Commitment and creativity in our parishes, organisations and schools in responding to changing needs

Communications: Compelling stories which show society at large how Christian faith makes a difference, and Catholics how they can get involved

Improvement: Learning as we go along, so that our social action goes from strength to strength.

Ultimately it's all about **evangelisation**: being good news for the world in which we live.

A provisional remit for *Faith into Action*

Insight: Understanding the needs of the world and our local communities, and the impacts which public policies have on them

Formation: Letting the church's social teaching stimulate us to respond in practical discipleship, including through existing catechetical programmes

Prevention: Challenging the structures of injustice and violence which cause harm and hardship – locally, nationally and globally

Intervention: Helping Catholics develop responses and engage with local agencies to meet need, with support from a network of home-grown specialists

Representation: Empowering individuals to make a Christian contribution to local partnerships or policy making, with appropriate support and accountability

Advocacy: Enabling the diocese, its representatives and all our people to be a prophetic voice in the public square, through informed contributions to debate

Cooperation: Connecting us across parishes, deaneries, counties and the diocese to foster common cause, build viable initiatives, and improve communications

Peer-support: Forming a self-sustaining community of practice connecting volunteers and supporters with opportunities to grow in spirituality, commitment, confidence and mutual support

Finance: Helping parish, deanery and diocesan projects to develop business plans, secure funds (including perhaps through a diocesan fundraising programme), and thrive into the future

Standards: Promoting good practice and effectiveness, for instance in working with volunteers, employing staff and purchasing ethically

Tools: Offering parishes and groups ways to discern how God is calling them to grow in missionary discipleship, and take practical steps to respond together

Recognition: Showcasing inspirational initiatives and rewarding generous service through a diocesan award scheme, and CAFOD's Livesimply scheme.

Join the journey

You are at the heart of *Faith into Action*. There are many ways you can get involved: receiving updates, helping to shape our plans, or offering your time or perhaps practical expertise. It all starts with getting in touch – here are some options.

- Find out more on the diocesan website at www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/faithintoaction [to follow]
- Register for updates and consultations, or let us know your skills or interests at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/X2WWVHG [to be edited]
- Sign up to the Justice and Peace Commission's Twitter feed at www.twitter.com/SaltForTheEarth.

If you'd like to talk anything over, Paul Bodenham would be delighted to hear from you: email him at justice.peace@dioceseofnottingham.uk or call 07470 907656. Paul is the diocesan Justice and Peace Fieldworker and has been appointed to manage this programme.

The backstory and some practicalities

In his apostolic letter *On the service of charity* Pope Benedict XVI encouraged every bishop to establish 'an Office to direct and coordinate the service of charity in his name.' The bishops of England and Wales then resolved 'to find ways appropriate to local situations whereby dioceses can give greater support and coherence to Catholic social action through the establishment of diocesan "Caritas" networks or structures'. Now Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) have awarded us a grant to develop a solution appropriate to us here in the Diocese of Nottingham, working with CSAN members including SVP and Faith in Families.

Benedict says 'Love – *caritas* – is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace' (*Caritas in Veritate*), adding that 'charity transcends justice and completes it'. The Nottingham Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission is fully committed to an integrated process of discernment, and is matching the CSAN grant with its Fieldworker's time. The Commission's current priorities are care for creation, modern slavery, hate crime, poverty and inequality, and support for asylum seekers and refugees. They are aligning their action plan to this programme.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity in Nottingham Diocese to develop a holistic programme for the future. We can take as our template Pope Francis' broad and generous vision of the Church's mission in the world, sometimes known as 'integral human development'. May God help us bring forth the fruits of love across our diocese, with justice, peace and care for creation.

A prayer for *Faith into Action*

O Lord, you ask of us only this:
to do justice, love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.

We ask this of you:
Help us to fulfil your command.

Open our hearts to the unbounded love
you give to all humanity in Christ your Son.

As we encounter him in those in need,
draw us deeper into discipleship
and outward into mission.

And so may we, your Church in this diocese,
who pray day by day 'your kingdom come'
find your kingdom already in our midst
among those we are called to serve
through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen