

ST PATRICK'S PARISH DOWNPATRICK

love God, love others, make disciples

SHARING VISION

A Vision for Parish Renewal and Divine Renovation



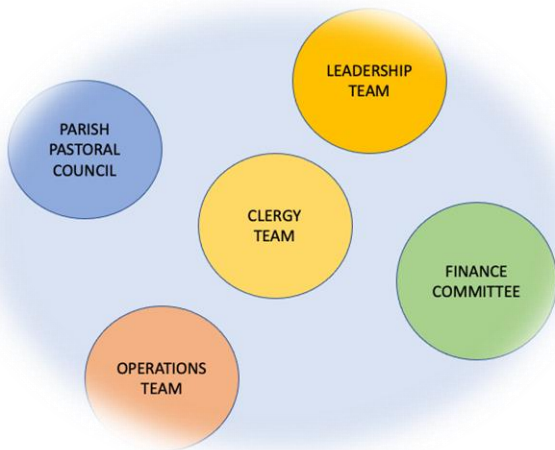
On Wednesday 29th November 2017, several parishioners accompanied Fr. John to an inspirational conference in Maynooth. The Transformed Parish Conference was attended by many priests and lay people from across the whole of the island. The keynote speaker was Fr. James Mallon who was then Parish Priest of Saint Benedict Parish in the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Highly acclaimed for his work with parish renewal and the New Evangelisation, Fr. James shared practical ways to inject new life into parishes in order that they become less concerned with maintenance and more concerned with mission, with reaching out to those who have not yet responded to the Good News. His book 'Divine Renovation: Bringing your Parish from Maintenance to

Mission' is easy to read and very encouraging. In it, Fr. James challenges us to rethink our models of parish life in order that we can become vibrant communities once again.

In the year after the conference Fr. John established the Christ Life Programme in St. Patrick's Parish with a view to drawing both existing parishioners and people who were not involved at all in parish life into a deeper relationship with their Saviour, Jesus Christ and into stronger bonds with the parish community as His disciples. The parish has run the Discovering Christ Course and the Following Christ Course each year since 2017 and will do so again beginning this autumn.



In the year 2019-20 Fr. John shared his own excitement about the vision presented in Fr. James Mallon's book with the Parish Pastoral Council which subsequently used a study guide based on the book to begin to draw up a new Pastoral Plan for the Parish of St Patrick. The pandemic greatly affected this work, but the Parish Pastoral Council is now working alongside Fr. John and the other priests on a renewed vision for our parish.



Under Fr. John's leadership a new grouping/leadership team was formed in the spring of 2021 to assist the Clergy Team to develop this vision for parish renewal and to be assist the Pastoral Council with strategic planning. This team has been meeting regularly, often weekly, to propose a vision for St Patrick's Parish in line with Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20) and St Patrick's Vision for the Irish people (Confession 41) including three main goals:

1. to bring parishioners to a personal relationship with Jesus
2. to create disciples who will grow in their faith
3. to transform St Patrick's into a missionary parish.

Beginning now and continuing for the next year the priests and the various parish teams want to share more about the process under way and about the vision at the heart of it all. This will happen in a variety of ways, but we are pleased to announce that on two of the Sundays in either late September or early October the priests and laity will speak at Mass.



You will find more on the vision for Parish Renewal and Divine Renovation on the parish social media accounts. It is particularly recommended that parishioners try to watch the five video presentations with Fr. James Mallon. You might invite other parishioners to watch them with you- *a Watch Party*.

The Parish of St Patrick's has had a long and proud history. It has had and still has wonderful parishioners who have served faithfully and met the spiritual and material needs of thousands of people in our locality.

It is exciting to begin our next chapter together. We believe that the Holy Spirit will renew our parish and is inviting us to grow and change so that we can be his disciples to many in the Downpatrick area who do not yet know the Lord.

