

Launching the Derry Diocesan Pastoral Plan, 2018-2021

God Is Love: A Perspective from Creggan

My name is Michael Lynch, I married, raised a family and have lived here in Creggan for 45 years. The troubles, their legacy and the everyday challenges of life, left times when I felt distant from any sense of God's love and saw little relevance of the church on the hill and its messages to my life.

In more recent times, however, I have come to see a purpose and plan of God's love for me and the gifts and opportunities flowing from him to help me meet my challenges and responsibilities which include spreading his message of love to others in our parish community.

On Saturday last I was privileged to be among 350 or so others at the launch of the Derry Diocesan Pastoral Plan. I heard Bishop Donal outline how the plan was developed with strong lay involvement, heard how only 70 priests now administer the whole diocese and the challenges this posed, and heard the voice of the hierarchy of the church state we need to find a new way of being church in these modern times.

The church has always been the people, served by the clergy, although many may have thought or experienced the reverse or felt they had no say or equal part to play within it. I see this new plan seeking to recognise and address this by opening a sincere and genuine dialogue with the people, to enhance the existing work of the parish, and to develop responses where people feel the relevance of God's love in their lives.

In Creggan there are already many groups and programmes which do this and lots of people who use their God-given talents to promote and develop the work of the parish. There are many others in our parish, however, who have talents that could enhance this work or help develop new responses for those who struggle with present-day life issues who may feel excluded from or unworthy of God's love.

The plan as you will hear and see it unfold over the coming weeks and months will seek your views and help towards its aims of *building a more welcoming and inclusive community in Creggan, exploring how we, as disciples of Christ and as Church, can grow in faith together and uncover how we all can play our part in working to make Jesus known and loved within our parish and beyond.*

It can only happen with your involvement and God's guidance.

I am immensely proud to live in Creggan and have witnessed God's love witnessed in our support of each other in many challenging times through a spirit of resilience and love of the people of the parish.

This next chapter is an almighty challenge for us all to rediscover and reinvigorate our sense of God's love, experienced and expressed through the people of God, the Church.

Only you can tell us how you would like it to be, and/or how you can help.

My sense is the clergy, at many levels, are listening and open to giving the laity, (the people, church, us), a voice and a more active part in a renewed way of being church and experiencing God's love.

Now, maybe as never before, it is your time and challenge to listen to God's call and to help us fulfil the parish plan, God's plan for the people of God in St Mary's, Creggan.