

World Communications Day

18th May 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend marks the fifty-seventh World Communications Day. In his annual address to mark the occasion, Pope Francis has asked all of us in the Church to redouble our efforts to ensure evangelical communication is at the heart of our mission at diocesan, parish and individual levels. The Holy Father also encourages us to make listening and dialogue key ingredients of our engagement with the new digital culture.

At the diocesan level, we have been listening to the feedback given at the recent Synod discussions. We have heard the voices of many who have asked for a renewed focus on Gospel outreach and engagement through modern media methods. As a result, we have set up a new Diocesan Communications Commission which has already begun this important work. The Commission is led by Father Michael Kane and is made-up of committed lay men and women with a background or interest in communication, all united by a passion and drive for promoting the Gospel.

Of course, this is a task entrusted to all of us within the Body of the Church, and the message we all communicate is paramount. We want to share a joyful and life-giving message to help build strong Catholic families and vibrant faith communities in our parishes and schools, throughout our diocese, and across the national and universal Church. In a particular way, we want to support our local faith communities to come back together after the strain of living under the pandemic. With good communication at the heart of our renewed mission, we can be even stronger than before!

To date, the new Commission has set up a new monthly diocesan magazine *Fontes* which highlights and celebrates the spiritual wealth of our parishes and school communities. Its free printed and digital editions have been well received throughout the diocese. You are invited to give it your fullest support and to send-in local stories or photos for publication.

The Commission also works closely with Being Catholic Television, Scotland's Catholic television network, to broadcast important diocesan liturgies and events, including the annual Chrism Mass and the recent Diocesan Anniversary Mass. We are also using this platform to engage new audiences in teaching, prayer and catechesis. This new resource has been especially valued by our sick and housebound who are unable to engage in parish life in a regular way.

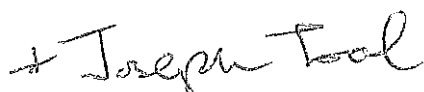
As well as writing policies to support safe and appropriate use of the digital space, the Commission has also been providing training days for parish social media managers and school digital champions to ensure we are maximising the reach of the Gospel online. The team also offers training and advice on church websites, social channels and effective content sharing. This is especially important as we seek to engage and re-engage younger Catholics and those who may have lapsed in their faith. Parishes, schools and other groups are encouraged to link with these training opportunities and to support the inaugural Diocesan Communications Conference which will launch in September of this year.

Over the coming period, you'll hear more about the Commission's work to support you, your parishes, schools and groups. If you're interested in getting involved or simply want more information, contact media@rcdom.org.uk

Pope Francis continually reminds us that we are called to be a listening Church reading the signs of our times. He encourages us to act boldly by discovering fresh and dynamic ways to proclaim the Good News. The new digital space, which is now deeply embedded in the culture of our times, needs to be embraced rather than ignored, as a powerful and positive tool of evangelisation. I encourage you to do all you can to make this a reality in the communities we serve.

As we await the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, let's pray for the work of our new Commission and let's pray that we will all use the gifts of the Spirit for the upbuilding of the Church in our own times. May we be bold in casting out into the deep and bringing Christ to new places.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph Toal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

+ Joseph Toal