**Diocesan Synod Report of the Diocesan Councils 2017**

**Proposed by Canon Adrienne Galligan**

**10 October 2017**

Your Grace, distinguished guests, members of synod and visitors,

There I was last Friday at school assembly waxing lyrical about the newly discovered health benefits of spider silk when a little **junior infant** got quite animated. No he wasn't squirming at the notion of spiders; nor has he a phobia. He was bursting to tell us what he knew about gold silk thread spun by the golden orb spider found in warmer climates than ours. A Junior Infant!!! Do you remember the poem 'The Deserted Village' by Oliver Goldsmith that contains the words: 'And still *I* gaze and still *my* wonder grew.......... How one small head could carry all he knew! ' in reference to the school master. A junior infant so well versed on spider silk - I, and the assembled school, were delightfully amazed. What great nuggets of fact about creation and its Creator would this little Junior Infant have at his disposal when he embarks on adult life I wonder? Sunday School Society of Ireland, Children’s Ministry Network, Building Blocks, Messy Church, Mothers' Union resources, our new Youth Officer, Susie, 3rd level chaplaincies and Greg the Young Adult Officer are all there in place now for us to utilize and involve in our ministry to toddlers right through all the age ranges.

That golden silk thread comes with me this evening in the form of the world wide web that the Diocesan Council's report encompasses. Mostly we think of webs as death traps for unsuspecting insects: but I would prefer to view it from the point of view of the newly discovered medicinal properties that this durable, flexible, functional, tensile, communicating device, all of which silk weave is, and offers the world. Our dioceses also have those attributes of durability, flexibility, communication, functionality and rigour. Applying the science of our Creator God in the form of the enzymes, proteins and vitamin k that spider silk contains offers repair to damaged heart tissue and enables the heart muscle cells to regenerate and repair. That is our purpose as the Body of Christ in the world: Proclaiming the Good News of our Christian hope and faith we offer repair, ease, listening, restoration and the **discovery of the possible** to parishes and the communities in the part of the world we inhabit and the wider world beyond Dublin and Glendalough.

Take 3rd level chaplaincy as an example of this, I'm sure you've read the inspiring account of witness, outreach, nurture and care by a very cohesive and focussed team of chaplains. The energy, ideas, adaptations in ministry to meet the need are inspirational. It calls to my mind the lines from the Come and See prayer *'enable us to embrace the energy of our children and young people, to enlarge our sense of parish and community and to expand the discipleship and leadership of all your people.'*  If that has been our yardstick then huge progress has been made this past year in the realm of children’s and young adult ministry.

Christ is alive. The mission of His church to bring hope to the despairing, comfort to the marginalized, truth and life to people who will never enter our holy spaces, continues. The Dioceses have responded to the call for mission, sometimes moving cautiously as evidenced by

* the gradual uptake of the Worship liturgies designed to explore the Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, Treasure 5 marks of mission;
* sometimes moving more swiftly as when we partnered with the Irish refugee Council or Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza, the pace sometimes directed by cultures and people beyond these shores or dioceses.

Fast or slow, the gold silk thread of development, adaptation, flexibility, durability is being applied for the benefit of many. It has been my privilege to sit on Diocesan Councils and witness the sincere level of debate, the open heart for mission and the deep concern over the wellness of parishes and parishioners. Could I take this opportunity to thank you Archbishop and the Diocesan Secretaries, Sylvia and Jennifer for the consistent efficiency and grace with which we on Councils are keep informed, involved and motivated.

A web needs a minimum of 7 anchor radial threads like guy ropes to secure the eventual construction to its surroundings. Could I suggest that those anchor threads are the 7 categories of ministry that the Diocesan Council report from pages 25-115 celebrates.

Radial/Category 1 Ministry to children, young adults and third level students and Child Protection

Radial/Category 2 Lay ministry and training

Radial/Category 3 Diocesan Outreach and Worship

Radial/Category 4 Pastoral Responses to Elderly members, Hospital Chaplaincies and the Homeless Initiative

Radial/Category 5 Fabric, Finances (Parish life, Clergy life), Furnishings - R.B. supports and requirements

Radial/Category 6 Mission Statement, Communication and Evaluation

Radial/Category 7 Opportunities for Personal Journeys of faith (Baptism, confirmation, Camino de Glendalough and Santiago, pilgrimage, ecumenism)

Linking these anchor radial threads are other spokes and spiral threads as in a web: if you like, the nuts and bolts of ministry for example the Building Blocks committee who liaise with Children's ministry practitioners, Sunday Club and Sunday school teachers regarding training workshops relevant to work at local level. Other nuts and bolt threads were the rehearsals by 10 schools who paticipated in the National School Choir competition to launch the 800 year anniversay celebrations of the uniting of the Dioceses. Another is the huge effort that goes into various forms of fund raising. Other golden thread strands are the enormous endeavours to co-ordinate, train and equip Hospital chaplains working in an ever changing and sometimes less that receptive work environment. Each of these threads of the healing web connecting to the radial/spokes express the vitality, flexibility and endurance of the work and witness we as a United Dioceses are engaged in for 'the advancement of Christ's kingdom' to quote the last words at the end of this book of reports. At the **centre** of all this work, ministry, aspiration and dedication who connects the entire structure is **Christ, our Saviour and Lord and motivator.**

Gold takes some heat to be purified. Some of the facts and works described in the Diocesan Council's report have known testing fires and when you read this report you probably got a sense of peoples and parishes agonizing over how best to resolve dilemmas; other times there has been a longer than anticipated gestation of ideas. You may also have got a sense of the exasperation, joy, relief, inspiration that many of the endeavours experienced. But overall I sense the united dioceses is in a very progressive place spiritually, financially and relationally.

May we hear more of the Lord's will and purpose so we can weave a greater web bringing health and wholeness to places and peoples in need. It is an honour to propose “that the Report of the Diocesan Councils to the Diocesan Synods of 2017 and the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2016 be received and approved.”